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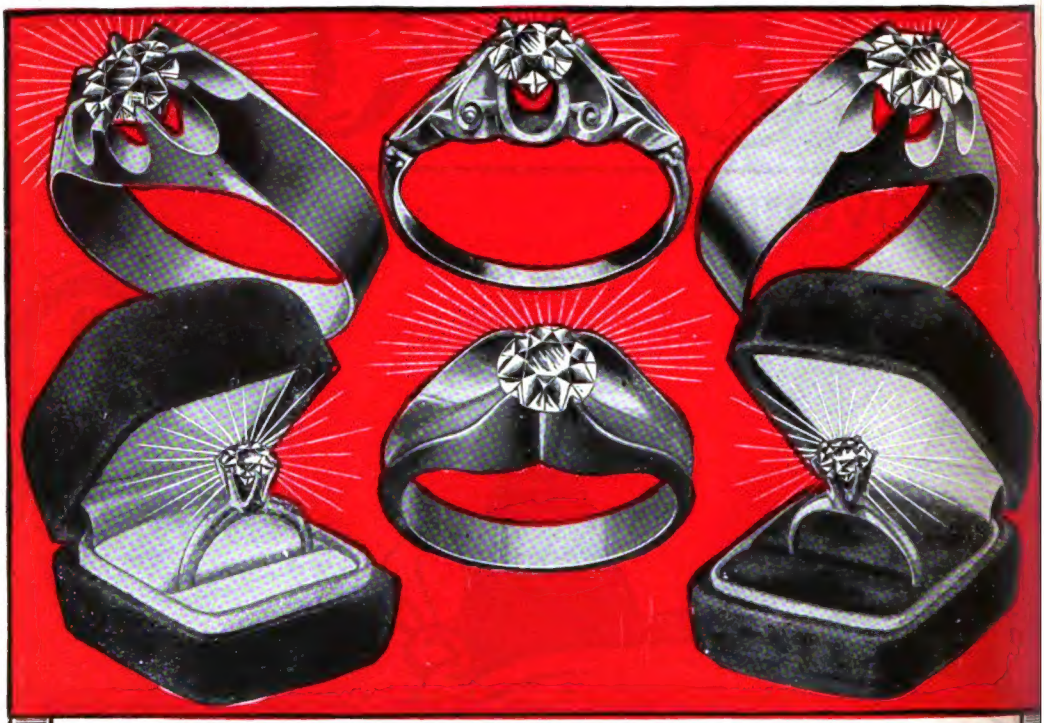

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The Black Cat

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The Black Cat

Toppy Haddon—Farmer

BY C. M. RAMAGE

Here's a breezy tale of the race track, a race horse who was "sun-blind," and a jockey who cleaned up by correcting the fault.

I HAD seldom seen two horses more beautiful. They came down the quiet village street with all the mock alarm of equine aristocrats, eyes dilating, ears far forward, and necks arching at each sluggish hound or pompous rooster they saw in the street.

At a word, they stopped; and while the driver climbed down they bit at each other with assumed ferociousness, very much as men, especial friends, pound each other on the back with opprobrious epithets! They were dun mares of great size, and of the perfect conformation of hunters; and though they were hitched to a nondescript buckboard, they were both groomed as for exhibition. One of them wore smoked-glass goggles!

The driver, ignoring them and disdaining the hitching-rack, was pulling a heavy crate of excited chickens from the rear of the buckboard. He was small, almost diminutive. His fiery red hair stuck out through a crack in his old straw hat; and behind a cloud of smoke from a corn-cob pipe, one caught fleeting glimpses of a pugnacious, freckled face.

"Hey, you old sand-in-the-sugar!" he yelled to the storekeeper, "Tear yerself away from yer prunes long enough to help me put this bunch of chorus girls in your chicken-hotel!"

"What ye sellin' 'em fer, Toppy, with eggs top price?" inquired the merchant, as he assisted in the disposal of the crate.

"They ain't doin' their turn right! I got a new egg cash register working on each nest up at the place, and these ladies ain't never punched the button yet! A chicken that wants to stay in *my* show has to sing a song of hen-berries, 'specially when they're forty cents a jury! Plump legs and breast and nothing else means the cannery fer them! I don't allow no supers at my place!"

"Do I get your eggs to-day?" asked the merchant anxiously.

"You do! The odds is forty to twelve against you—and tell the lucky geezer that gets 'em, that they came from Toppy Haddon's farm!"

"Toppy Haddon!" I shouted, with a flood of recollections, fond and otherwise, rushing into my mind at

the name. "Come here, you red-headed Mick and explain why the best jockey in Maryland is going about disguised as a 'rube'!"

"Well, if it ain't the old Trilby-peddler!" whooped Toppy. "Say, Bo, I'm sure glad to see you! Wait here until I get a lump of sugar fer the ponies and then we'll take a drive."

He dived into the store, and both mares turned to watch him. He returned with two lumps of sugar, giving one to each. Then he climbed into the buckboard; I followed and he turned the team.

"Where are you going, Toppy?" I asked.

"Home! I'm going to show you where I hang up me hat!"

"Who are you working for, Toppy?"

"I'm working fer two ladies—Mrs. Haddon and Miss Haddon!" he chuckled, as if it were a great joke.

"Whose mares are those?"

"Mine! you old moon-eyed skate! Don't you remember Aunt Kate that youse went broke on at three to two down at Bennings six years ago? She finished seventh because there was only that many hosses in the race! That's her with the goggles on!"

"Stop, Toppy! Let me out! I won't ride behind a horse as mean as that! I'm surprised you give her stable room! Why, she wasn't one, two, three! She made me lose my last dollar and my faith in pretty mares!"

"Easy, easy, Bo! You don't know it all! There's more of a tale to Aunt Kate than the one she switches flies with—and I'm just about to tell it to you.

"You see, I got to getting heavy from high living and low company; and after a while, I couldn't get a mount! Course, I didn't have a cent saved up! Did you ever see a jock that did? Well, they got to sending me out over the timber and I didn't like that! The steeple-chase is fer niggers! I went to a hundred and twenty and then couldn't find anything but a job as stable-boy—and I had just fallen into the mush-pot with Maggie O'Hagan. Things went from worse to awful. I tried to beat the bookies and bet on inside dope, which is four times worse than guessing—and, of course, lost my last dollar!

" 'Good-bye, Maggie darlin'!' I says one night.

" 'Where are you going?' says Maggie.

" 'I'm already there—with the pesky bow-wows!' says I. I'm just waiting fer the gink with a fake smile and a rope to say, "Nice doggie," and pop me into the sausage whizzer!'

" 'Which is it—hard luck, or lack of brains?' says she.

"She had me there; because I never would admit that I was shy on the head stuffin'; and I never was a hard luck squealer. So I tells her, 'Oh, reservoir,' until I could catch a good thing.

" 'I'm the only good thing you got a look-in at!' says Maggie. 'You go get a job and come back here and we'll see a preacher. Then I'll see that you keep the job!' says she, fightin' back the tears with harsh words.

"So I struck the stables fer a steady job and got it—thirty bucks a month! Me that had got five hundred fer a race many's the time! I had to work

'em out mornings, clean 'em up afternoons, and bed 'em down nights; and hard as it was, it went all right, because me and hosses always liked each other. I lived on ten dollars a month and sent the rest to Maggie to keep. Fer a few months, things went like this—and then Aunt Kate came along. She had been out of the money fer a year, and had a rep fer acting bad. Sometimes she would start bad and finish like a scared antelope; other times, she would beat the barrier and open up a hundred-yard gap, only to throw it away at the finish! But *something* was always wrong. I tried her a few fast miles and found that she could do plenty of quarters in record. We decided it was failing wind, but I knew that was poor dope, because sometimes her record quarter was the last quarter! The bookies never gave a good price on her fer a year because they thought something was going to be pulled. But finally they gave twenty to one, and later, forty to one. Aunt Kate chased the others home as per usual. Her owner, Buck Berger, then announced her sale on a certain day with a lot of other 'has-beens.'

"I liked Aunt Kate without knowing why; and I thought she had a good mile in her. One night I woke up and I had it! I went out—it was three in the morning—and fed Aunt Kate a bite to eat and took her out on the track before daylight. I had a stop-watch, and after warming her up good, I put her away. Say, she could run some! We went like a streak—and the watch said one-forty! Well, you know, with me at a hunderd twenty, that was going some! I put her in the stable and beat it to Maggie's. I told her my dope and asked her for all the money she had. Gee! that was a piker trick! She never said a word, but reached down somewhere and pulled out two hunderd bucks! She had made it pushing forty pounds of hot iron across longeree ten hours a day in a laundry.

"At the sale, I bid against some cheap guys and got the laugh and Aunt Kate fer one hunderd-sixty dollars. The same day, I entered her in th Merchants' Handicap, billed fer six weeks ahead. They gave her only a hunderd and two pounds—and me at one twenty—because, of course, I was going to ride her.

"The day I gave up them sixteen 'X's' fer Aunt Kate, I went to a harness shop and got a pair of goggles made fer her. I had 'em fixed so I could slip ovals of ising-glass in 'em. The contraption cost me eight cold bones.

"I fit it on Aunt Kate, and then took it to Maggie. She lined it with velvet, and when I put it on Aunt Kate's head she didn't seem to mind it a bit. I slipped in some blue glass, and say, I was riding a new hoss! I kept her under wraps until the 'clockers' and the 'rail-birds' had all gone and then worked her a fast mile. She was good; but not as good as at night. Then I tried smoked ising-glass and she was perfect! My dope was right! She couldn't stand bright light! She could run when the light was at her tail, but stopped when it hit her in the eyes! She seemed to be tickled to death with her new glasses; and you know the way a hoss will stick his head into a bridle when he

wants to get out of the stable real bad? That's the way she acted with them goggles!

"Well, I was training down to the minute and got rid of six pounds in three weeks, when I woke up to the fact that me and Maggie was not going to have anything to bet on Aunt Kate. I was getting surer every day that she was coming in ahead. I nearly died fer a week! I tried to borrow, but kale was harder to ketch than a bridle-shy hoss! I had wore out my credit before I started to work. My wages just barely paid Aunt Kate's board bill.

"One afternoon, when I had put Aunt Kate away fer the day, I picked up a paper and saw that Knockout Jorgan, who wanted to be feather-weight champion, was meeting all comers at the Gaiety—one hunderd bucks to anyone under one fifteen who stayed four rounds. I knew I might get laid up so I couldn't ride, but I decided to take the chance!

"Gee! I was desperit when I found myself facing him before a big crowd that night! I figured that he'd think I was going to stall and clinch and cover from the start; and so, two seconds after we stepped together, I laid him out fer the count of eight, with a clean punch to the wind. The crowd sure yelled! He was a game boy all right and saved himself fer the rest of the round.

"Round number two was just two wild-cats, one scared and one mad! I was the scared one! The house went wild and a big geezer yelled:

"'Five hunderd to four hunderd that Haddon stays!'

"Someone took him and he yells again, 'Half to you, Toppy, if you stay!'

"Well, in the third, the roof fell on my jaw, and when I come to, I heard someone saying, far away, 'Seven! Eight! Nine!' and I was on my feet! I took a jar on the top of the head and went down again, feeling better every second. Jorgan thought I was stalling and was standing over me. At 'four,' I took a quick roll and jumped away from him across the ring. He was too anxious to get me, and when I turned and smoked back to him, it confused him, and all he could do was to chop me considerable. He had my eyes closing fast and I was afraid I couldn't see to finish the fourth; but the bell and the ice saved me.

"The fourth round was where I fooled him again. He saw that my eyes was almost shut, and of course thought I would cover and stall to last. So when he bored in, wide open, my little old cork-screw from the hip to his chin found him asleep—and left him that way! Yes sir, he took the count! And the big geezer gave me all of the four hunderd he had won! That made me five hunderd to the good! Gosh! Them yellow boys between my fingers did more to take the stiffness out of me than the rubber I hired did! But I was too bunged up fer a week to ride. I sent Aunt Kate out under a nigger I knew —and without her goggles, you bet! Say! she bucked him off the first day she was so mad about not having 'em.

"In a week, I was strong and down to one hunderd and ten. The big thing now was to find some one to play my money right. I found him—

a clean, straight guy who run a gambling joint down town. I put him wise and he agreed to put my money on Aunt Kate without any excitement. But he woggled his bean sideways at me betting on the skate. His own money went on Hasdrubal.

"Next, I went to see the judge. He sure was a white man. I told him I was going to ride a long shot and make her win and wanted to have a fair shake-down.

"'What horse do you ride?' says he.

"'Aunt Kate,' says I.

"'A man named Haddon owns her, does he not?' says the judge.

"'I'm him,' says I.

"'All right! I'll look out for you. You bought the mare at auction, did you? She used to run well, but my boy, she has no chance in this race!'

"'Judge, she is going to run so good that I am afraid they will say she has been under blankets all the time!' says I.

"'I'll see you through,' he says, laughing.

"Maggie came out on the day of the race—the first time she had ever seen the track. She had on the glad rags fer fair, and I was proud of her because I knew that she bought 'em and made 'em herself!

"After the first four races had been run, comes the Merchants' Handicap. There was twelve starters and I drew fourth place—just where I was likely to get trapped or fouled. As soon as the crowd saw Aunt Kate, they gave her the merry ha-ha fer fair, 'specially when they saw her goggles. Say! they laughed themselves sick! And 'way over in the grandstand, I could see Maggie fighting back the tears because they were laughing at her man and mare!

"You know the bookies in a big race often signal the jockeys they have a string on. I knew old Witherspoon and his signals. He came up just as we lined up and I caught his signal. It was to the effect that Aunt Kate and Hasdrubal, the favorite, was to be kept out! I knew that Lidig had slipped my five hunderd over at awful odds!

"Kate was feeling fine and we all got away at the first try. The dash fer position was awful; so I dropped back, letting them run their fool heads off. Hasdrubal got the inside with Superstition, Martianna and Dalloway Bird almost neck-and-neck. The next row was Angel Maid, Rippling Water, Idle Wakefield and Aunt Kate on the outside. I was going to stay on the outside, too, because I didn't intend to be trapped even if we had to go a few yards farther. Aunt Kate's new specs were suiting her fine and she was running easy.

"When we came to the quarter, there were seven tails in front of us! At the half there were six—and then they tried to foul us! Kate leaned out a little, laid back her ears and ran away before I knew it! She passed 'em all and was half a length ahead of Hasdrubal before I got her under control!

"'You old fool!' I growled, 'do you know that may cost us the race?' But she only tried to do it again! We came to the three-quarters just that way. It was Aunt Kate, Hasdrubal and a nose at each flank of Aunt Kate, who was outside. I knew if someone

had a spurt left to head us, they would fool us sure! So I shook out the reins and let 'er go! Say! that mare just stretched out like a bird, and Hasdrubal got the whip! He was some horse, too, and the rest of them could have been covered with a big blanket, they was so close! It was the greatest finish ever seen on that track; but Aunt Kate was there with bells on. I had to give her one touch with the whip to make it a sure half length—and when we flashed in, winners, I listened fer the yells! There wasn't none, excepting Maggie's, and I heard that clean down to the quarter where I got Kate stopped!

"I hustled back and heard the judge say:

"'First, Aunt Kate—' and then I leaned over and cried, I was so happy.

"'Time,' says the judge, 'one thirty-eight, the record for this track!'

"Then they called me up to the stand and made me explain her reversal of form, which I did. I took Kate to the stable myself and turned down an offer fer five thousand dollars fer her! I saw Lidig, told him I would settle with him the next day, borrowed a thousand dollars frum him, and took Maggie home in a taxi!

"Next day, Lidig and me had a settlement. He had got rid of a hunderd at one hunderd to one! Two hunderd at fifty to one, and two hunderd at twenty to one, which made me cash in twenty-four thousand, five hundred iron men! I tried to make Lidig take a thou' for his trouble, but he said, 'Nix, Toppy! Don't try to be a sport! Be a tight-wad from now on! This may be your last haul—soak it away, Bo!'

"I did. I put twenty thousand in the bank; give Maggie two thousand to get married on (she used one hunderd of it and thought she was being awful foolish). I bought a little buzz-wagon and we went in it fer a wedding trip, looking fer a—farm! We found it right out here. We got the swellest little show you ever saw: chorus of one thousand Rhode Island Reds that does an old dance called the Egg Polka! And we got a pony ballet with Aunt Kate fer lead, with some of the most promising colties in the country!

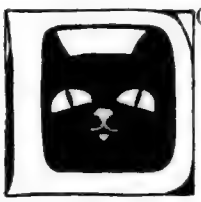
"There she lays, Bo, a hunderd acres of rich land that's bringing me and Maggie a profit that almost makes me ashamed when I think of the fun we are having on the side! We paid one thousand dollars fer the mare there by Aunt Kate, and they each have two-year-old colts that will bring fifteen hunderd when I put them around the track!

"But say! Don't hand me the admiring glance fer a minute! Nix! It was Maggie stirring round in me brain-box that kicked up the idea that Aunt Kate was half blind in the light; and it was Maggie that put the sleeping-powder in the punch I gave Jorgan! And say, Bo! Here's a tip straight from the owner! If a man goes to the bow-wows, it's his own fault; if he makes good, some Maggie done it!"

The Dunedden Mystery

BY LESLIE C. CROSS

A man disappears—is accepted as dead—then his twin brother arrives on the scene and things begin to happen.



DOCTOR! Doctor! John, my husband, has gone!" Mrs. Leval shrieked out the words and fell into a swoon. The doctor came hurrying in. An hour ago he had pronounced John Leval dead. There was no doubt about it, he was as dead as the crack of doom, but there was the bed with the clothes all rumpled and —empty. He could not believe his eyes. The arrival of the undertaker shed no light on the matter. He had come along the road and had seen no one, except Morgan, the night man, on duty at the corner. It was a mystery beyond solving. Something for the insurance adjusters to worry over, and choice gossip for the villagers. Thus the great mystery of Dunedden had its conception.

Six months later, Mr. Seddons, the bachelor parson, came out of Mrs. Leval's house looking very agitated. He had tentatively proposed to the pretty widow and he had received a very satisfactory answer. In a few days, he would know if he could count on the fat insurance money that went with the hand of the lady. As he passed out, the postman came up the path, and Mrs. Leval, watching from the window, hastened to the door. She took the letter that he handed and closed the door, and then she looked at the address and sank weakly against the wall, for the writing was that of John Leval and there could be no mistake. She tottered through the hall and sank into a chair and the letter lay on her lap unopened.

She picked it up gingerly and thought about her husband. She had felt a very proper grief at his demise, but she was not at all sure that she wished him resurrected. Two months ago, she would have welcomed it, but that was before Mr. Seddons came into her life; but now, she was not at all sure.

With a little sigh of resignation, she tore it open; a half inarticulate cry rose to her lips and she turned hastily to the signature. "Abraham Leval," the words burned themselves into her brain and she began to understand. Abraham was John's twin brother. Her husband had often spoken of him. He had been out in the Dakotas many years and she knew that they were difficult to tell apart. And now Abraham was planning a surprise visit. He had written her to keep it secret from John. He knew nothing about her husband's death and would be on in a few days. She did not want him. Her answer to Mr. Seddons must be delivered very soon and Abraham might object, but she

had three days to plan, and he might be gotten out of the way.

At last it came to her, after hours of weary tossing. It was so simple that it made her laugh. She would go away to the city and when her brother-in-law came, he would find an empty house; and Marie, her bosom friend, would write her of his movements and she would not return until he had gone back to the Dakotas. It was so simple, but—she would have to leave Mr. Seddons, and the thought was not so pleasant. It was a difficulty that made her wish her brother-in-law at the bottom of the sea. It held her undecided, but fate, though she did not know it, was to take the matter out of her hands.

The widow had just finished her breakfast when she saw the familiar figure of Marie, her bosom friend, hurrying up the road. She came with a half hop and half walk that was peculiar to her in moments of intense excitement, and Mrs. Leval knew that something unusual had occurred, so she sat expectant as Marie bounced in.

"Oh, dear!" wailed the visitor, "it's dreadful news, and all so sudden. Poor Mr. Seddons—"

She got no further, for Mrs. Leval had her by the wrists and gripped them painfully. "What has happened to Mr. Seddons?" she asked fiercely.

"Lordy, let go of my wrists; that's a dear," gasped Marie. "I'm sure it's not my fault, but the dear man was found dead in his bed. His housekeeper went to call him. The coroner—why, Lydia, what's the matter?" and her speech trailed off as she went over to Mrs. Leval, but the widow fought her off. Marie gave one look at the frail, swaying figure, and then she burst into tears.

"Lydia," she cried, "I always thought that—"

"Don't," the stricken woman's voice was full of entreating agony. "Leave me, Marie, leave me."

Marie crept away and softly closed the door, and Mrs. Levall sank down to weep.

The third day was ending, and Mrs. Leval, sad-eyed and weary, sat by a solitary shaded lamp. Suddenly, the listless shoulders straightened, for a footstep, familiar and unmistakable, was on the threshold. She sat rigid in her chair waiting for the familiar click of the key in the front door, for it was her husband. But the footsteps paused and the doorbell clanged noisily. She jumped to her feet. Her sorrow made her forget it must be Abraham, her brother-in-law, and she was glad that he had come. It would be good to have someone to lean on. If he were like his brother, she could not have a better man. She ran hastily to the door, flung it open, and then stood shrinking against the wall, staring wildly with her hand held over her heart, for it was her husband; there could be no doubt of it; the same heavy frame, the same full beard with its streak of gray running over towards the right.

"John," she said breathlessly.

He removed his hat and revealed a well-remembered bald spot. "Mrs. Leval," he began.

"Aren't you John, my husband?" she asked piteously.

A smile—her husband's smile—il-

lumined his face. "We were always mistaken for each other as kiddies," he laughed, "but I had no idea that his own wife would not recognize us."

"Then, then you are Abraham?" she faltered.

"Yes, I am Abraham," he admitted. "You have said nothing to John?"

"John is dead," she answered weakly.

"Good God!" and he put his hand to his head with a gesture peculiar to his brother.

It was uncanny to see him around the house, and after supper, when he lay back with his feet towards the fire, she could have sworn that she had found her husband, but as the evening wore on, she detected a vital difference. John always talked shop, but this man was travelled, and his tales of the Dakotas almost dispelled the illusion; but then again, she began to doubt her senses whenever she looked on him and it was a great relief when he finally tumbled off to bed.

Mrs. Leval shut up the house and went to her own room, but not to sleep. The quick events and the seeming resurrection of her husband had unstrung her nerves; and what was more curious, the living photograph filled her with longings for the dead, but not the dead of yesterday. She no longer thought and wept for Mr. Seddons, but for the hearty, burly man who had been her companion for so many years.

Abraham Leval was up before her. She found him preparing the breakfast as John had so frequently done, and it gave her a new shock, and after he had taken his second cup of coffee, he rose and stood before the window.

"It's a pretty little town," he commented. "Guess I'll stroll around and see it."

"No! no!" said Mrs. Leval hastily. "You are so like my poor husband that people won't know the difference. There was no end of trouble over the insurance and—" Her speech trailed off into a wavering cry of horror, for there was Morgan, the town constable, staring fascinated at the window.

"What the dickens does he want?" growled Abraham. "For two cents, I'd go out and punch his head. It's high time that I came around here to protect you. Who is that other loafer?"

Mrs. Leval glanced out of the window. "That's the doctor," she groaned. "They are coming to the house. You must hide in the attic. I'll explain."

Abraham Leval looked sternly down. "What for?" he asked slowly. "Aren't you my brother's wife?"

The two men were on the doorstep, and Mrs. Leval hysterically seized her brother-in-law's coat and attempted to drag him away.

"Let go!" he growled. "I'm going to see what this is myself," and he dragged himself free and strode heavily towards the door. "Well?" he interrogated, "what is the meaning of this invasion? This is my sister-in-law's house."

The doctor glanced significantly at Morgan and the constable took an extra hitch in his belt, an old custom, before he performed any work. "We came to see Mrs. Leval," the doctor parleyed, looking past the huge bulk, and signalling a covert, friendly greet-

ing to the widow, standing terror-stricken and white in the background. "We have business with her."

"You will have to tell it to me," announced Abraham brusquely. "I'm her brother-in-law and I'm here to protect her."

Again the doctor glanced at Morgan and attempted to edge his way inside, but Abraham moved his body and jammed the doctor against the doorpost. "None o' that," he growled, and the next moment he felt something cold slapped up against his neck and Morgan adjured him to walk out of the house. For a second he stood stock still, and then, with a quick snake-like movement which seemed incredible for his size, he threw his head to one side and grappled with the constable.

"Just as I thought," panted the doctor, as he rose from the ground and painfully fondled his knee. "The man's mad as a March hare, Morgan. What the devil's the matter with the man? Get up. He'll be out again!"

Morgan slowly assumed a sitting posture. His face was contorted with pain and he held a hand over his side.

"I never would have believed it," he complained. "I had him covered but he ducked like a jack rabbit, and now he's got my gun and here we are."

"You might have known that a lunatic has no respect for a gun," sneered the doctor. "What do you think I kept on winking for?"

Morgan said lurid things as he rose to his feet; every bone in his body ached and he shook his fist at the house, but he raised his eyes to see his enemy looking out of one of the upper windows. A great bearded head crouched behind the constable's revolver and a terrible voice commanded them to move. Morgan seized the doctor's arm and the two of them made a halting exit from the neighborhood.

Abraham Leval enjoyed his triumph and could not understand Mrs. Leval's gloom. He was used to a life of strife and could see nothing unusual in the transplanting of his free ideas to the conventional East.

"Do 'em good," he declared with relish. "They're nothing but a lot of busy-bodies. I'm going out to see the town."

Mrs. Leval pleaded and persuaded in vain, and stood sad-eyed as her brother-in-law swung down the path. He had gone but a short distance when a dozen men swooped round a house and held him, fighting, in their midst. His great strength was of little use now, and he was borne in triumph to the town hall, to be, in due course, incarcerated in the local jail.

The insurance men had got wind of the matter and besieged Mrs. Leval. They were exulting and insulting in their demeanor, and the poor widow was at her wits' end; but excitement must always ebb, and in a few days there was nothing to it but a man who hotly protested in jail that he was not John Leval, and his sister-in-law who stuck to the same story. This ought to have ended the matter, and legal wheels had already started to recover the insurance company's money when the mystery grew deeper than ever.

A despatch from the West showed that Abraham Leval did exist, and furthermore, that he had started for

Dunedden and was supposed to be there at the moment. The town authorities were nonplussed. The description fitted perfectly with the man in jail and there seemed nothing to do but to release him and make the best of a bad matter, when out of the clear blue sky, or to be more exact, the dark night, the mystery solved itself.

Mrs. Leval, as was her custom, had visited Abraham Leval in jail; indeed, the good woman spent the most of her time between that building and her lawyers, but she was through for the day.

A heavy fog set in and she was glad to be home, and after supper the doctor called to comfort and offer advice. He had been a frequent visitor of late and had done his best to make matters easy. It lay upon his conscience that he had pronounced John Leval dead, when he was so palpably alive, and he had delved deeply into his old books to account for the phenomena. "It's not that I'm holding it against him," he assured her. "I am convinced that your husband was the victim of a very rare case of coma, a not unknown thing in medical science. To all appearances, the man was dead, the functions of the body completely suspended. Such cases have occurred. I do not recall having observed them, but there is no reason why it should not happen in Dunedden. Your husband, of course, recovered his functions whilst we were out of the room, and was probably in a delirium when he got out of his bed and escaped. But what beats me is, why he insists on denying his own identity. He has no debts."

"He is not my husband," said Mrs. Leval heatedly. "I have questioned him repeatedly. He does not remember our honeymoon."

"Then he is out of his mind," the doctor answered. "I have suspected it ever since the case started. His great strength, unless—"

"Unless what, Doctor?" Mrs. Leval was impatient.

"I've been looking into criminology," said the doctor. "In the case of a motive, for instance, a man might forget."

"Then you really believe that John would leave me for that wretched insurance?" blazed Mrs. Leval.

"I don't say—what was that?" and the doctor stared towards the door.

"The front door opened," faltered Mrs. Leval. "Oh, merciful Father!" for there, in the doorway, stood a strange, rag-clad figure. His beard was streaked with gray, and there was a bald spot on the top of his head.

Mrs. Leval staggered to her feet. "John!" she gasped.

The pitiful figure limped painfully into the light and stretched out two tattered and scrawny arms. "Lydia!" he muttered, and she flew towards him.

"My poor, poor boy," she crooned, like a mother over her child. "Tell me, tell me, what has happened?"

"Ah!" he breathed heavily, holding her tight against his rags. "It is good to be home. What happened to me? I do not know. They tell me that I was taken out of a freight car in my pajamas and that I had a fever for months, but I do not know."

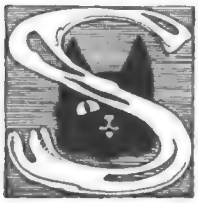
The doctor slipped into the hall and got his hat, then he went out into the night and hurried to the jail.

To Him That Hath

BY HARVIE DEJARNETTE COGHILL

A full-of-laughs story about a domestic quarrel, and how an innocent, unwatched turkey brought happiness where there had been discord and woe.

"I was a-lying at Hell's dahk do';
'Way in de Kingdom!
I nebber did lie so lo' bofo';
'Way in de Kingdom!"



UKEY paused, flatiron in hand, and listened through the half-closed kitchen door. The singer came nearer, the creaking of an ox-cart mingling with the sound of his voice.

"Satan shot a mighty ball at me;
'Way in de Kingdom!
Miss muh soul an' he hit muh sin;
'Way in de Kingdom."

Sukey sniffed. She lifted a newly-washed garment from a basket on the floor, laid it across the board and began to iron it.

"Hwoa, Zeke! Hwoa, Bill!" The ox-team halted. The singer, a small, wizened, coal-black darkey of fifty years, crawled down from his perch, and walking with a sort of skip and shuffle like the playful antics of a circus baboon, approached the cabin, crooning as he came.

"Satan's mad an' I am glad,
'Way in de Kingdom!
Miss one soul he t'ought 'e had;
'Way in de Kingdom!
Ring doodle dum! Praise de Lawd!"

His bullet-shaped head was surmounted by a gray wooly crop, which was tied in serrated rows with red strings stripped from a bandana handkerchief. His nose fitted flatly and snugly against an expanse of blackness, punctuated by small piglike eyes, while a grinning red gash relieved by rows of dazzling teeth occupied the space between his nose and vanishing chin. He was clothed in a cast-off cutaway of ancient make, mossy with the contact of years, and stained and tattered by many a jag. His left leg, broken in childhood, had through lack of attention, grown at an angle from the perpendicular, and extended outward from the knee—this accounted for his peculiar gait. Each leg was tied just below the knee with twine, causing his trousers to bush out like the skirts of a ballet dancer. As was his custom, winter and summer, he was barefooted.

Shuffling through the kitchen door, he paused when he noted the ominous glitter in Sukey's eyes. She was a large mulatto of fleshy mould and unusually even features for one of her race. Why she had chosen to consort with Ole Frankie, was a riddle to the white people for whom she washed. Standing with her hands on her massive hips, she surveyed the wizened little darkey, with curling lips and snapping eyes.

He uneasily shifted his weight from one flat foot to the other like a guilty schoolboy, assumed a cheeriness that

he did not feel, and asked:

"Ole 'oman, w'at yo' got fo' ter stay muh stummuck?"

He licked his thick lips in anticipation.

"Doan yo' talk ter me, yo' lo' down po' white fo'ks nigger! Here I bin wukkin' muh fingers ter de bone, an' yuh a-spreein' muh money two day gon' at de cotehouse. Dis yere flatiron's all yo' gwinter git ter stay yo' stummuck—yo' heah me!" with rising inflection as she lifted the iron from the board threateningly. "Looka' heah, nigger, yo' better gimme back muh money w'at yo' don' t'iefed out'n muh Sunda' stockin's, or dere'll be a dead nigger a-standing in yo' tracks!"

The small darkey rolled his eyes in assumed astonishment.

"Lawse mussy! W'at yo' talkin' 'bout, honey? 'Splain yo'sef!"

"Doan yo' call me honey, yo' lim' o' Satan! Gimme back muh money!" emphasizing the demand with a threatening flourish of the improvised weapon.

An expression of injured innocence crept over the old man's dusky countenance. He placed his hand over his heart and replied:

"Hon', I hope me die an' clar fo' grashus I ent lay eye on yo' money. May de lightnin' sizzle me en muh tracks ef I don' tuk yo' fi' dollahs!"

"Den how'd yo' know 'twas fi' dollahs, yo' t'iefin' black nigger? Dat proves yo' don' stol' it!"

"Sukey, yo' orter be 'shamed ter 'scuse a insterment o' de Lawd o'—"

"Insterment o' de debbil, yuh wid yo' preachin's—yo' lo' down t'ief—dat's w'at yo' is," she interrupted, as waving the flatiron excitedly, she approached Ole Frankie. He, wise by experience, had already retreated to the door and was edging through. He made a final appeal.

"Tent t'iefin', hon', kase de Scriptur it say 'A man an' he wife am one flesh,' an' I sho' did need dat money fo' ter buy rimmetiz medsin fo' de mizry in muh back."

"G'way fum heah, nigger! Yo' t'iefed it ter buy w'isky dat'll gib yo' mizry all ober. I'se don' wif yo'—now yo' gib me muh money er git!"

"Honey, I 'clar' I ent got yo' money now, I—"

A swiftly propelled flatiron clipped his speech, and he ducked through the door just in time to save himself, the missle denting the closing door instead of his skull.

Ole Frankie, sorrowfully muttering to himself, shuffled down the road toward the village.

"Ole 'oman's gitten' mighty perticular. As de Scriptur says, 'De kose er true lub it nebber do run smoov,' en 'De way er de transgressah am not a watermilyun patch.' Yas, Lawd, dat's de troof. Seems like ole 'oman mean w'at she say, so I got ter skirmish 'roun' fo' tree dollahs—two am all I got lef'," ruefully taking stock of the contents of his shot-bag purse.

He pondered the situation over. Unless he restored the money he must sleep out of doors to-night. The problem was how to make three dollars before nightfall, and he must act quickly, for already the sun was sinking below the tree-tops. Borrow, he could not, for even if any of his colored brethren possessed so much money, his credit was unquestionable.

As for stealing, or "t'iefin', as the negroes call it, he was above such low measures. "T'iefin'" was a deadly sin and would surely merit hell-fire. Taking money from his wife, "raiden on de white-folks' gyardin, or roost," or borrowing a few articles from the weekly wash—none of these was "t'iefin'"—no; they were mere trifles, and no more than a "nigger's" just rights.

Aimlessly he shuffled along the road which wound through the outskirts of the village, reflecting with lowered head and bent shoulders as he walked. Now he was passing the minister's house, a large frame dwelling, several hundred yards from the "big road." In the rear was a garden and several outbuildings, and some distance back stood an old corn-house. Ole Frankie remembered that sometimes the corn-house contained turkeys for the Thanksgiving or Christmas sacrifice. Sarah Jane, the cook, had informed him that the unceasing gobble disturbed the minister, and therefore the noisy birds were confined in the corn-house while awaiting the sacrificial axe. It might be worth his while to investigate.

The Reverend Samuel Wright sat in his study writing his Christmas sermon. The door creaked. His wife stood on the threshold; behind her was the cook, a basket of glittering ornaments on her arm.

"Samuel, I am going to take Sarah Jane with me down to fix up the Christmas tree, and won't be back till late. Don't take in any tramps while I am gone; don't forget to lock the back door if you go out to get a drink of water; and for goodness sake, don't let the cat in. And don't let your lamp smoke the chimney. It's too high now—there, that's better," as crossing the room, she lowered the wick. Without waiting or expecting a reply, she turned and left the room, and a moment later, the Reverend Samuel heard the front door close.

He sighed as he nibbled his pen—a distressed rabbit-like sigh. "Dear me; I wish Sarah would credit me with having some common sense. She certainly is a managing woman, but one does grow tired of being eternally managed, and in such trivial things! I wish something would happen so that I might prove to her that I possess a little of the worldly wisdom she values so highly." He chewed his pen reflectively a while, then returned to his sermon. The little gilt clock on the mantel interrupted the silence with nine strokes before he again stopped. As it finished chiming, he thought he detected another break in the silence. Yes; someone was knocking at the back door. Some poor fellow who needed help, possibly. He picked up the lamp and answered the summons. An old negro stood on the porch, a turkey in his arms.

"Howdy, Marse Wright, how's yo' corperosity seguashuate? 'Clar' ef yo' ent de ve'y spit en image o' muh ole Marse Charles. He war some gemmun, he war."

"Well, Uncle, what can I do for you?" asked the minister, apparently pleased at the compliment.

"Marse Wright, I'se got mo' tuhkeys fo' Crissmuss den I kin eat, en muh ole 'oman dun tol' me fo' ter

sell some er dem so's we kin buy some Crissmuss gifs fo' de po' fo'ks' chilluns."

The minister reflected a moment, a puzzled frown on his face.

"I am not sure, Uncle, whether Mrs. Wright has provided one for the Christmas festivities—she was talking about it—I really don't know what is best to do—I—"

Ole Frankie smiled ingratiatingly and replied:

"Marse Wright, sence yo' am so much lak muh ole Marse, I'se gwinter let yo' hab dis yere tuhkey fo' dollah an' ha'f, w'ich am monstus cheap."

The Reverend Samuel noted the big golden-brown gobbler and thought, "Now opportunity is knocking, now I can demonstrate my business ability to Sarah." Aloud:

"All right, Uncle; I'll take it."

The minister lighted a lantern and the turkey was presently stowed away in the corn-house. After bidding Ole Frankie a cheery goodnight, he returned to his unfinished sermon, meanwhile congratulating himself upon his shrewdness. Turkeys were high this Christmas. He remembered now his wife's remarks to this effect. Only yesterday she had said that fair-sized turkeys were bringing two dollars and a half. He had picked up a bargain—saved a dollar—not even Hannah could discredit his business acumen now.

A half hour later, the Reverend Samuel was roused by another knock on the kitchen door. Bemoaning this second interruption, he went to the door, and to his surprise, saw the old darkey standing there.

"Well, what do you want now?" he queried vexedly, his flow of inspiration having been interrupted for the second time; and then, before the old negro had time to reply—"Ah! another turkey," noting the darkey's burden.

"Yassuh, Marse. Yo' see, it am disaway. W'en I got home, dat tuhkey's brudder kikin' up sech a rumpus 'bout bein' lef behime, dat I jes ent got de heart ter lebe 'im suffer, en t'inkin' yo' sho'd need anudder one fo' New Yeah's day, I don' fotch 'im ter yo' fo' de 'dentical price w'at I done sol' he brudder."

Here was another opportunity clamoring to be admitted, yet the Reverend Samuel hesitated.

"I really don't know what my wife would say—you had better await her return. I expect her soon."

The old darkey looked aggrieved.

"W'y, Marse Wright, ef yo' doan want 'im, I sho' kin sell 'im t'other fo'ks. But I tells yo' right here am w'ere yo's don' broke yo' 'lasses jug ef yo' doan tuk 'im. De good book it say 'De man w'at doan pervide fer he fambly am wuss den enfiddle,' en furdermo', 'Behol' now am de excepted time.'"

"Well, Uncle, I reckon I'll have to risk it." And once more the minister paid Ole Frankie a dollar and a half, and taking the lantern, the Reverend Samuel led the way.

"Heah, gib de ole nigger de light, Marse; ole man's eyes mighty po'—kyarnt see ef yo' hol's it," said the darkey, as he took the lantern from the minister and shambled along beside him. They had hardly gone twenty paces before Ole Frankie stumbled, and out went the light.

"Lawdy mussy! Dere now, jes 'look w'at I don' don'!" he exclaimed, as he picked himself up and fumbled the lantern.

"That's all right, Uncle—here's the house now. We can make out without the light. Just shove the turkey in while I hold the door. H-mm! the other turkey is very quiet, isn't it?"

"Yassuh, Marser; he don' bin hoppin' 'roun' right peart terday, en I reckon as he am too tired ter holler, en am sleepin' 'way, dreamin' 'bout Crissmus times."

After putting the turkey in the house, the old darkey bade the minister goodnight, and shuffled homeward. Ole Frankie was happy now. The burden of his misery was rolled away. The five dollars would restore him to his fireside. Now if he only had a peace offering to restore him completely to Sukey's favor. At the thought, he paused a moment, irresolute.

The Reverend Samuel returned to his study in high favor with himself. The consciousness of having done a double stroke of business and saved two dollars on household expenses, gave him an exalted sense of his own cleverness. How Hannah's eyes would sparkle when she found two big fat turkeys in the corn-house on the morrow! Then she would have to admit his shrewdness, and perhaps she would consult him about matters of business, and even allow him to select his own clothes in future. These were his thoughts as he returned to his much interrupted Christmas sermon.

Next morning, the Reverend Samuel took a casual stroll through the back yard after breakfast. He hoped his wife would notice the presence of the turkeys. If she didn't, he would call her attention to them and witness her surprise and elation. As he directed his steps down through the garden to the distant corn-house, he saw his wife ahead of him. He watched her eagerly as she opened the corn-house door and stepped in. He heard a faint scream. His wife re-appeared in the doorway. He rushed to her.

"Oh, Sam! my big turkey gobbler has been stolen! The one I bought for Christmas dinner. I was just getting ready to kill it. Now it's gone. Did you hear any noise last night? No; of course not—it's too far away. If only you weren't so nervous, we wouldn't have lost it. No one would have dared to steal it from the henhouse. And to think I paid two dollars and a half for it. Oh, I wonder who could have stolen it?"

The minister felt sick. His first impulse was to proclaim the happenings of the preceding evening. Upon second thought, he decided to keep silent. A faint light began to illumine his clouded brain, and he felt uncomfortably warm.

"By the way, my dear, what was the color of the turkey?"

"As if that would help!" she replied scornfully. "How impractical you are, Sam. If you want to know, it was a golden-brown."

Then the illumination became a conflagration—the Reverend Samuel felt that his face was burning. What a fool he had been! No; he couldn't tell her—she must never know. As

he followed his downcast spouse to the house, he attempted to comfort her.

"Well, my dear Hannah, we must not worry. It may be that the Lord didn't intend that we should feast while so many thousands must fast. 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'" But Hannah refused to be comforted.

There was rejoicing in a certain cabin in Coon Hollow. Peace and contentment sat once more enthroned on Ole Frankie's hearth. Once more his 'ole 'oman beamed upon him the sunshine of her approval. Sitting before a log fire in his bedroom, Ole Frankie could hear Sukey stirring about in the kitchen, as she made preparation for a glad tomorrow. The odor of cooking permeated the two rooms of the cabin, and how good that turkey did smell! Ole Frankie, as he smoked his corn-cob pipe in tranquil meditation, philosophized to himself:

"It sho' am a true sayin' dat 'To he dat has brains much shall be gi'en, en fum he dat ent got eny, shall be took'n 'way eben dat w'ich he is got en gi'en ter he dat has.' Yas, Lawd, dat's de troof, sho's yo' bo'n."

The Man-Beast

BY WILDER ANTHONY

A revolting murder has taken place. The corpse is mutilated horribly as if by a wild animal, but the evidence indicates otherwise. A doctor, a Jap, and six coyotes lead to the detection of the murderer.

"ONE thing is certain," Doctor Morse declared positively, "it is the work of a maniac, Bert. No sane man could commit such a deed. It's—it's not human."

Sheriff Parker, small and neat in a natty blue suit, puffed slowly at his cigar. His eyes, behind their large glasses, were half closed. He was thinking hard and for a few minutes he made no reply.

"It looks that way," he finally admitted, "although we mustn't be too sure, Horace. Men have often killed in the frenzy of liquor or great rage, you know, who would never have done so in calmer moments. Then, too, a very clever man might maul his victim as a blind. Still, the idea is plausible. There may be a homicidal maniac at large in Coon Valley. A large, powerful fellow with oddly shaped hands, I should say for a guess."

"How do you deduce that?" the coroner was quick to ask.

"By such evidence as the case affords, which, Heaven knows, is little enough. This herder, Carrigan, although past middle age, was a big, strong man. Appearances indicate that he fought hard; but the murderer handled him as though he were a boy."

"I should say so!" Doctor Morse shuddered slightly. "The body is hardly more than a pulp. But how do you get the shape of the murderer's hands?"

"From the marks on Carrigan's throat," the sheriff answered. "Finger prints, you know, are my hobby, and these are most unusual. They are crooked—toe in, so to speak, like the talons of a hawk. The dead man was apparently choked first; then mauled and beaten."

The coroner made no reply, and for a space the two men smoked in silence. Both were frankly puzzled. Aside from its brutality, the murder bore no distinctive feature. Barring the distorted finger-marks, which stood out black and hideous on the dead man's throat, there was not a clue. Even Sheriff Parker, clever detective though he was, seemed baffled by the utter lack of a motive.

Patrick Carrigan, a sheep-herder employed by a ranchman named Stanley, had been found dead on the open prairie some ten miles from town. He had been attacked and killed while bringing in some sheep just before nightfall of the previous day, and his body had been discovered within two hours after the murder. So much was positively known.

Despite his size and strength, the dead herder had been horribly beaten

and mutilated. The ground where the body lay was dry and hard, and it showed few signs of a struggle. Footprints could not be successfully traced on the sun-baked sod. With the exception of a small clump of quaking asps, a few yards away, there was no sign of cover for more than a mile in any direction. It was a lonely and desolate region; strangers were few and far between, and Carrigan had not had an enemy on earth that any one knew of. He was slightly past middle age, sober and industrious, and he had nothing of value on his person at the time of his death. From the marks on his throat, the sheriff judged that the assassin—he did not believe there had been more than one—had crept upon his victim from behind, seized him by the neck and throttled him as he stood. Afterward, in a mad frenzy, he had beaten and pounded the body with a heavy stone which lay near-by.

"Horace," the sheriff broke out suddenly, "I wish that you would use all possible speed in performing an autopsy. This case is singularly barren of clues and it is just possible that the post-mortem will help us. I am going out into the valley again this afternoon—that Barry matter brought me back this morning before I was through out there—and you can locate me at Stanley's. There must be a clue. No crime was ever yet committed without its perpetrator leaving some trace behind him. It's a law of nature."

The coroner nodded.

"All right," he agreed. "I'll 'phone you the result before dark to-night, or, better still, I'll run out to the ranch after I'm through here."

Soon afterward, he took his departure, while the officer busied himself in a few simple preparations for his journey. It was a little past noon when he seated himself in his high-powered roadster and drove rapidly out of town.

The speedy car made short work of the dozen miles between Elktooth and the scene of the crime, and in a trifle over half an hour from the time he left his office, the sheriff stood on the spot where the body had been found. It was at the bottom of a tiny hollow, and certain ugly stains on the grass and stones bore mute witness to what had occurred there. Except for the steady purr of the roadster's engine, not a sound broke the hush of the prairie.

Smoking thoughtfully, the sheriff let his eyes rove about the hollow and across the surrounding plain. He noted the clump of trees, the snowy tops of the mountains in the distance, and the dusty road, which stretched like a brown ribbon in the direction of Elktooth. Everywhere was peace and prosperity, and yet right there at his feet a man had been violently killed only a few short hours before.

As he often did when alone, Sheriff Parker began to talk to himself.

"It was a purposeless and brutal deed," he muttered. "No reason for the thing at all—a crime like that is always hard to trace. Some one murdered that poor devil of a herder—in broad daylight—right here. He must have—those bushes yonder—"

Abruptly ceasing his disjointed monologue, he walked over to the

thicket, into which he crawled on hands and knees. The small trees formed a kind of natural arbor, and once inside the outer fringe, the sheriff was able to stand up again. Here the ground was soft and a little damp, and noting this, the searcher's eyes brightened. A number of dog-like tracks were distinctly visible in the soft mold, and the rank growth on one side of the little arbor had been trodden flat, as though some one had moved about there for an extended period. Dropping to his knees once more, Parker studied the ground carefully, lense and pocket rule in hand; then he thrust his head through the bushes and peered toward the scene of the murder. It was in plain sight.

Satisfied on this point, he again began to carefully search inside the thicket. Stuck on a long thorn, about a foot from the ground, he found a bunch of grayish fur, which he detached and examined closely. Nothing further was found, however, and the sheriff finally ended his search, convinced that he had discovered all that the thicket had to tell.

Once more, at the place where they had found the body, he studied the ground minutely. Several times a puzzled look crept into his eyes and twice he whistled softly. At length he sat down on the step of his automobile and lighted a fresh cigar.

"Humph!" he said aloud, "it's a queer business. He was in the thicket right enough—must have stood there an hour at least; but that helps mighty little. Small feet—not over tall, I should say, although he must be very strong. Coyotes have used that thicket, too. Watching for a chance to gather in some of Jim Stanley's sheep, I suppose."

Then, coming to a sudden conclusion, he jumped into the roadster and headed out into the open country.

He had gone less than half a mile when he slowed down his machine and peered intently toward a little rock-topped knoll to the left of the road. It was several hundred yards away but the sheriff could distinctly make out the fast-walking figure of a man. He was an elderly man, dressed in a long black coat, wearing a straw hat—something not often seen in those parts—and carrying a long cane in one hand. He appeared to be hurrying and kept looking behind him, almost as if something of which he was afraid followed him, although there was not a living thing in sight.

There in that lonely place the figure had an incongruous appearance that aroused the officer's interest, and he was stopping his car for a better view when the man suddenly spied him, ducked behind the rocks like a startled woodchuck, and disappeared.

"I wonder who that can be?" Parker asked himself, as he resumed his ride after an instant's hesitation. "He's a queer-looking specimen and a stranger right enough, but he looks harmless."

A quarter of an hour later, Sheriff Parker brought his roadster to an abrupt halt in front of the Stanley ranch-house and jumped out to greet the big man who appeared in the open doorway. It was Jim Stanley himself, huge, grizzled, and bluff, and he welcomed the sheriff with a hearty hospitality that was only slightly tempered by the previous day's tragedy.

"Come in, come in, Sheriff," he bellowed. "I've been looking for you all day. You said you'd be back before noon."

"I meant to, Jim, but I couldn't make it," smiled the latter, as he stepped into the house. "Too busy. I'm here now, though, and I want all the information you can give me about Carrigan. He had worked for you several years, I believe?"

"Yes, and a good hand, too," the big ranchman answered in a quieter tone. "He was a good man, Bert, and we all want to see the cowardly skunk that killed him get his needings, but I don't know as I can help you a whole lot. The thing happened out of a clear sky—we're all guessing. Incidentally, it snarls my business up considerable. It wasn't enough for me to lose my best man the damned wolves got my best trained dog."

"Oh, by the way," the sheriff, comfortably seated in the ranch office, abruptly changed the subject, "who is the old fellow I saw on my way out here? Queer looking gentleman in a straw hat. Know him?"

"I should say yes!" Stanley affirmed with a chuckle. "That must be the professor; leastways that's what we call him. Funny old coot—Scotch, I think—came here about two months ago, a couple of weeks before Morry's boy got lost, and rented that old homestead shack of mine over on Dry Gulch. He's a freak all right. Lives all alone with a Jap servant and half a dozen coyotes."

"Coyotes?" Parker looked up inquiringly.

"Yes,"—Stanley chuckled again—"he traps 'em and uses 'em as subjects in some kind of crazy experiments he's carrying on. He's got scientific junk enough in that cabin to stock up a hardware shop. I know, for I had one of my men haul it all out from the railroad for him."

"Oh, I see; kind of harmless crank, eh!"

"That's him exactly. He helps a little to keep down the coyote and timber wolf census and he bothers nobody. He keeps to himself and we hardly ever see him except from a distance. He hates visitors. Except for his Jap, who's both deaf and dumb, he lives like a hermit."

Sheriff Parker said nothing for a few moments. The talk of coyotes had made him remember his discoveries in the thicket, and that human monster whose trail he was trying so hard to pick up. At that instant Stanley's tenant did not interest him overmuch, although he made a mental note to stop at the shack and see the old fellow for himself some day.

The talk fell into other channels, and Stanley had supplied all the details he knew in regard to the dead sheep-herder by the time the sound of an approaching automobile was heard. A few seconds later, Doctor Morse hurried into the room, an expression of intense excitement on his face. The sheriff looked up eagerly.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Great Scott, Bert!" The coroner dropped into a chair and began to mop his shining face with his handkerchief. "The thing's incredible; it's uncanny. His brain is clean gone!"

"Gone! What—!" Parker stared at his friend in amazement.

"Yes." Doctor Morse collected himself with an effort and went on more coherently. "Carrigan's, I mean, of course. The man's skull was opened and his brains taken out —clean. After that, to cover the theft, I suppose, the head was crushed in as we found it."

"Good God!" Parker jumped to his feet and paced violently around the room. "Brain gone!" he snapped!" between quick puffs at his cigar; "removed—taken out! That is certainly new. I never heard— How do you account for it, Doctor?" he flashed out suddenly.

"Heaven only knows! I can't account for it. It's a fact; that's all. What is more, the job was done by a skilled surgeon. I doubt if I could do as good work myself."

"Humph!" With this exclamation the sheriff ceased his pacing and threw himself into a chair. Savagely biting the end from a fresh cigar, he lighted it and began to smoke furiously. For several minutes there was absolute silence. Parker was mentally floundering on the edges of a most stupendous discovery, which he could all but grasp. Sooner or later, he knew that he would grasp it, and that when he did, the whole thing would be clear to him. The motive was established, at any rate. The sheepherder had been murdered for his brain. Some one for some reason wanted—

At length the officer's face cleared somewhat and he began to breath more naturally. At last he could see a glimmer of light. That brain, of course, was to be substituted for another. Modern surgery had demonstrated the possibility of such an operation, although the thing, so far as Parker knew, had never been actually done. Still it was possible.

"Jim," he turned abruptly to Stanley, "when was that dog of yours killed, and how? Was it about the time of the murder?"

"Yes," answered the ranchman, in some wonder at the question. "We found him, or what was left of him, this morning. Must have happened last night some time. The wolves and coyotes are pretty thick, and I suppose the dog got too close to some of 'em."

"I see. This professor; he has some coyotes, you say? By the way, what's the man's name? You've never told me."

"Curtice," replied Stanley, answering the last question first. "He's got a wire pen over at the shack, where he keeps his coyotes. He and the Jap trap 'em."

"And this Japanese, you speak of. He's a mute, I think you said?"

"Yes. He comes over every morning for eggs, milk and such truck. He can't talk; always brings a note from the old man to make his wants known."

"Good enough!" Sheriff Parker seemed very much pleased at something. "Tomorrow morning, then, during the servant's absence, we'll make a call on the master. Perhaps we shall be lucky enough to find him out also. I'd like to examine that dwelling of his very much indeed. It is beginning to interest me."

Doctor Morse stood up in excitement.

"You've discovered something,

Bert?" he questioned eagerly. "This Professor Curtice—whoever he is—is a stranger to me. Is he the author of this horrible business?"

"Perhaps," Parker vouchsafed. "At any rate, I think he will be able to throw some light on the mystery. As a medical man, Doctor, you are aware of the remarkable discoveries of Dr. Alexis Carrel in the transplantation of veins and organs, I suppose; and you know the lengths to which science will lead some men."

"Great Heavens, man!" the coroner gasped. "You can't mean that this hideous murder was committed in the pursuit of some experiment? I catch your theory—Carrigan's brain. My God!" He stopped short and stared at his friend.

The sheriff nodded slowly.

"You're beginning to see it," he commented. "It's incredible, Lord knows; but it's the only hypothesis, Horace. Furthermore, I have a suspicion that Carrigan is not the first victim. We've never solved the disappearance of Morry's boy, you know."

Next morning, however, contrary to Stanley's assertion, the Japanese did not appear at the ranch. Convinced that longer delay would be useless, the sheriff did not wait for him to show up, but started for the cabin immediately after an early breakfast. Since it now was apparently impossible to visit the place while its occupants were away, Parker made no effort to conceal his movements. He proceeded openly, albeit he was working thus far almost wholly upon conjecture.

It was a beautiful morning in early September, warm and bright. Meadow larks and prairie chickens flew up from in front of the automobile as it buzzed across the plain, while the pungent odor of sagebrush gave a tang to the faint breeze. Leaving the car at the foot of a hill, a hundred feet from the shack, the three men—Stanley had insisted on coming— approached on foot.

There was no sign of human life about the place. The door was closed and all the windows heavily curtained. At one end of the cabin an addition had been built, half surrounded by a woven wire pen, which contained the skulking forms of several coyotes. This addition, Stanley volunteered, was the professor's workroom. There was a door leading directly into it, upon which the sheriff rapped sharply.

There was no response. Twice more the officer knocked with the same result; finally he spoke a few words to Stanley. Putting their shoulders against the light pine structure, the two men gave a powerful heave. The door crashed inward, and they stepped across a narrow entryway into a small room.

It was about twelve feet square and had one small, curtained window. The walls, ceilings and floor, were covered with white oilcloth. In the centre, stood an enameled operating table of the sort commonly found in the offices of practicing surgeons, while a glass-fronted case in one corner, contained an imposing array of shining instruments and bottles. On a sanitary washstand near the door, lay several bright knives and a large bowl covered with a white cloth.

Sheriff Parker's breath left his body in a low whistle of surprise—even he had not been prepared for what he saw—while his keen eyes darted from object to object without missing a single detail in the room. Jim Stanley stood dumbfounded; but Doctor Morse gasped audibly.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "The appointment is almost perfect. A major operation might easily be performed here."

He turned inquiringly to the sheriff, but the latter paid no attention to him. A few quick steps carried him across the room to a heavy, iron-bound box which stood near the instrument case. It was locked, but a few deft twists with one of the slender operating knives sufficed to open it.

It was full of papers, typewritten sheets and newspaper clippings, and the sheriff grunted his satisfaction when he saw the name of Dr. Alexis Carrel staring at him from several of the latter. His theory was proving itself, although even yet he did not guess the full horror of what he was about to discover. Throwing aside the loose sheets with barely a glance, he rummaged the box until he found a thick, leather-covered notebook. This he opened eagerly; Doctor Morse leaning over his shoulder.

The first few pages of the book held nothing of importance, merely a few accounts and some obscure scientific data; but farther on, the officer caught his breath sharply. Here, under the title of "The Great Experiment," began a weird and terrible confession.

At first, it was merely a jumble of dates and figures, with here and there a few words that meant little to the readers, but following that date of July tenth of the current year, the diary became coherent, to some extent, although it still bore evidence of the diseased mind of its writer.

"Eureka—it is done!" the thing began. "The Japanese—a low type, I fear, but best for my purpose—has consented. I shall operate for the removal of the growth tomorrow. Ha! Ha! Thus he imagines in his ignorance; but, in reality, I shall remove a far greater thing than that small tumor. The beast is ready. Tonight I shall open its skull. I have plenty more— they are easy to get, but the man is different. So much the better, that he is already dumb. He can not tell, and this place is very suitable. They think me a crank—these foolish rustics. The securing of this hut was a stroke of genius. No one guesses that I, Archibald Curtice, shall some day rise to—"

Here the narrative degenerated into a rambling mass of figures and medical terms, but was resumed on the next page.

"The transplantation theory is correct. Curtice has proved it beyond a shadow of doubt. Success is mine! The wolf's brain has been transferred into the skull of the man. The Japanese is alive and well, though still dumb and—some curious slip here—deaf. He is normal save for a craving for bloody meat. But the animal—it did not respond. Some error in the solution. It is dead—one-half my work—the lesser half—lost. Another human brain,—I must have it! Coyotes are many and easy to trap; but a brain!"

Under date of several days later came the following:

"I have hit upon it. I am secure from interruption here in this isolated spot. The Japanese—half beast as he is—obeys my every wish. The coyotes follow him like dogs. At my order he will—but can I do it? It is the only way."

Still farther along was another mass of figures, and the following and last coherent entry:

"I have succumbed. Science must be fed. The greatest good for the greatest number must be my cry henceforth. To-day, the Japanese surprised a young boy. His brain now lies in solution, while the body has been hidden in a place I know of. To-night I will—but there must be no failure. A brute with a human mind!

"The solution was too weak—the coyote died—the work is lost! Another I must have. That herder of sheep—I have noticed him—he is much alone. It should be easy—but the Japanese—he terrifies me! What have I done? His craving to kill! Twice, when my back has been turned, he has attempted to creep upon me. I must be careful—I dare not fail."

Sheriff Parker closed the book slowly and looked up at his friend. Little beads of sweat stood out on his bronzed cheeks like diamonds. In spite of his efforts at self control, his voice shook.

"Good God!" he breathed. "Can such things be?"

The coroner staggered like a drunken man.

"The man's insane," he mumbled. "Crazy as—" He was interrupted by a loud shout from Stanley, followed instantly by the banging report of a revolver shot.

With startled cries the two men sprang up and whirled around.

A few paces inside the door, writhing in its death agony, lay the stocky figure of a Japanese. Before any of them could touch him, the man stiffened in death, one clenched hand still holding a big knife. The fingers of this hand—Doctor Morse noticed it with a thrill—were long and crooked.

Jim Stanley swore nervously.

"I had to do it," he said briefly, as he repocketed his revolver. "The fellow was just going to jump on you two with that knife. He didn't see me, I reckon."

Parker nodded.

"It's just as well," he remarked. "A creature like that is better off dead. I wonder where his master is. The old fellow must be about here somewhere."

He turned and went into the other part of the cabin, which as yet they had not entered.

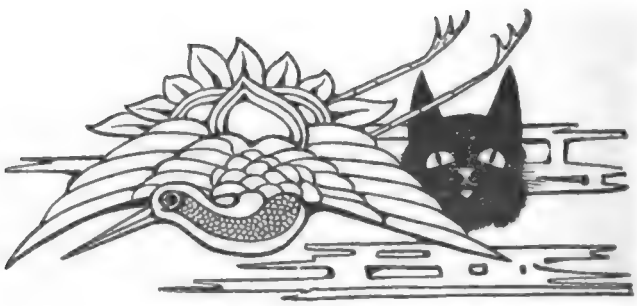
In what had evidently been used as a living room, lay the dead body of Professor Curtice. The old man lay on his face, hideously sprawled out, his white hair flecked with red stains. His fears of the Japanese, that monstrosity of his own making, apparently had not been groundless. He had died before finishing the final half of his experiment.

Sheriff Parker eyed the body in a few seconds of meditative silence before he turned to the coroner, who stood at his elbow.

"That ends it," he observed. "The man has paid for what he did. Another case of a great mind falling under the spell of a single idea. His confession, as set forth in that diary, is proof enough, I think, that he caused the death of both Morry's son and the herder."

"It is," said Doctor Morse; "although the way you came to suspect him is not quite so clear to me."

"It all came to me soon after you announced the loss of Carrigan's brain, Horace. I had already discovered that the murderer had small feet—most Japs do, you know—and this one stood in the shelter of those bushes near where the body was found, for some time. Stanley's story of the professor and his experiments with coyotes gave me the link I needed. Too bad we couldn't have arrived sooner, although it is probably for the best as it is."



Luke McLuke Says

BY J. SYME HASTINGS

You never heard of a night watchman who was troubled with insomnia.

Clothes won't make the woman if the woman makes the clothes.

The old-fashioned woman who wore a Mother Hubbard may not have been as stylish as her daughter, but you couldn't see the other side of the street through her skirts.

A man never works as hard to hold a job as he did to get it.

The married woman who used to trust in the Lord, now has a married daughter who trusts in her lawyer.

The bachelor may be homeless, but the married man is also home less than he should be.

What has become of the old-fashioned drug store that used to handle drugs?

If some widows didn't wear black, you would never imagine they were in mourning.

Wages are always too high when you want some work done, and they are always too low when you are hunting for work.

The Stork hasn't any more sense than some men. If you invite him to call once he will want to drop in every time he passes your door.

There is a lot of tobacco produced in this country, but the fellow who lets his smoke blow into your face never seems to run across any of it.

Summer has passed. The reason we know this is because the ladies in the cuts in the department store advertisements have doffed the white fluffy lingerie, and are now posing around in union suits.

Be sure you are right, and then ask your wife.

An egg is luckier than a boy. You never saw a woman beating a bad egg.

An egotist is a man who thinks he is as smart as you are.

Love is something that makes you hold a girl's hand for four hours and forget that you are sitting on your hat.

Fashion is something that makes a fat girl imagine she has to wear a bustle.

A woman never knows what she wants until she finds out that she can't get it.

Booze is funny stuff. It makes one man want to kiss the bartender, and makes another man want to whip him.

The old-fashioned woman who used to have a "God Bless Our Home" motto and a "Rock of Ages" chromo in her dining room now has a daughter who has a "What is Home Without a Garage?" motto and a picture of "September Morn."

A girl may be careless about the rest of her anatomy, but she always hides her ears.

Some men blow out the gas, and others come home and let Friend Wife find a pair of elbow length gloves in their pockets.

Once upon a time there was a merchant who guaranteed women's stockings in stout sizes. He starved to death.

Gods of Gold

BY FREDERICK A. WILSON

Guey Min let Chinatown know he had discovered the great secret which made men rich, and Chinatown left the joss-house to come to the house of gold.

GUEY MIN was a worker in metal. In Chow Tsien he had learned from a great master how to make curious things out of gold, and silver, and brass, and so deft and clever had his hands become, that he was allowed to stamp his name on his productions, just like any other artist. The master, because he so loved his art that he neglected to take the cash which might have been his if he had even held out his hand to take it, had been poor all of his life. But just before he died, he became suddenly rich—so rich that those who knew him said that the Gods had smiled on him because all his life he had been an honest man. It was whispered, that one night while he was asleep, golden yellow pieces of money had come tumbling into his room through the windows and the open door, and that they danced up and down on the floor as if they had life and were glad to be near so great and good a man.

But, of course, this was only a story, although there were some gossips who really believed it. And afterwards, the servant who cooked the rice and *chie yok* in the master's rooms, used to tell how, while the old man was on a rug in the corner, ready to die, he sent for his favorite pupil, Guey Min, and said:

"I am going to that other world, Min, but before I go, I will tell you a secret that will make you as rich as a Pekin mandarin. Without money, art dies like a plant from which the water is withheld; with money, it becomes strong and flourishes." Because his ears were those of a man instead of a cat, the servant heard no more; but it was enough. And that was the way Min got the secret, but no one but himself ever knew what it was, because, when the master told it, his voice was like the whisper of a passing spirit—so low that no one but Guey heard it—which is the way all secrets should be told.

That was the beginning.

For years, the pupil held the great secret and no good had come of it. He was so poor, he had to dress in common cloth like a field laborer who has to work seven days a week, and he had no servant to wait on him. Before he had left China, his friends used to say to him:

"I greet you, Guey Min. When will the secret of the great master turn into gold?"

There were many who said that, because there were many who hoped they would some day profit by his good fortune when it arrived. Then

Min would become angry, and deny with vehemence that he knew any secret.

"He who works well, eats well, and sleeps well, is happy enough," he would say, "and I am content, for if I had all the money in the world, I could not eat two bowls of rice where I eat one now. One blouse, two shoes, one hat, one bed, one pipe to smoke, enough tobacco to fill it; it is sufficient; I am satisfied."

Then, one day, he closed his shop, after he had packed everything he owned in a shiny bag with a handle in the middle, and with two other Chow Tsien men who were merchants, and who sold goods, he took passage on a ship and came across the ocean. They didn't stop traveling until they reached New York, where they went to Mott Street and took rooms near the big temple, which had once been a tenement house, and where the Chinese worshippers went on odd days to burn the prayer sticks, and to learn their fortunes. Four days after the metal worker had paid his rent, he nailed a sign on the outside of his door, and those who looked at it read:

GUEY MIN

WORKER IN PRECIOUS METALS

GOLDEN GOOD LUCK GODS

TEMPLE IMAGES

It was a fine red sign, with red streamers on it to keep away the devils who come at night, sneaking around like evil words, destroying business and undermining reputations. He made and sold rings, and bracelets that were curiously carved with snakes and dragons, and big-eyed fishes, which were considered lucky. He worked in gold that was without alloy, so that it was yellow and soft, and virgin, just as it came from the ground. Always, he was bending over his bench by the window, cutting, and carving and hammering; and it seemed to those who came and went, as if he never slept.

"He is a true artist," said the men who came with him; "he is not a hewer with a heavy tool; he works with his heart as well as with his hands. He has a mind like a child, and can be cheated by cunning men. If he loved money like these foreign devils, he could have it by holding out his hand, for he has a great secret that could make him rich—that could make any man rich. Yes, that could make a thousand men rich if he would but tell it."

Like water thrown on the ground, the story spread to every corner of the street; to the cellars where the gamblers stood behind the fan-tan tables; to the shops, where the merchants sat in gloom and sucked at their pipes; to the rooms where opium was smoked; and even to the homes where little children played on the floor. From talking of it in whispers, they soon began to talk of it with loud voices, while they stood on the street and looked up at his window.

Sue Cheung, the curious one, he who was the frayed and tattered watcher for the gamblers, who, once a week, lost in ten minutes what it had taken him several days of watching to earn, for the first time in three years, turned his back on the tables when he had his money in his pocket, and swiftly climbed the

creaking stairs to the room of Guey Min. He would find out about this thing. If riches come to all, to be appreciated, they must come quickly like sudden storm clouds in a clear sky, and if there was such a thing as a secret, well— Perhaps the first to ask this man with the mind of a child would be the lucky one. His eyes narrowed themselves down to cunning slits. He had not been a watcher all these years for nothing, studying faces, voices, gestures, that useless men might be kept away and only those with money allowed to enter and play. He paused for a moment at the door and studied the sign. Then he went in, opening his eyes wide, that he might look innocent. He fumbled in his pocket, brought forth his money and laid it on the bench.

"I should wear a ring," he said carelessly; "as good a one as that will buy," touching the bills with his forefinger, stained with cigarettes.

"A new coat would be better," remarked Guey Min, glancing at him out of the corner of his eye.

"Every one has a coat," answered the watcher; "only the prosperous have rings."

Min took a handful from a drawer and laid them before him, each with a tag that told the weight and the price. When the bargain had been concluded, the watcher began to question craftily:

"It is said," Guey Min, that some day you will be a rich man."

"So I will, if my friends will come and buy my goods," was the answer.

"And that you know of a great secret that will bring money to a man very quickly," he went on, as if the other had not spoken.

"Not quickly, but surely. The pathway of unceasing labor leads to it."

"It would be good if one could get as much of this as he could carry." He pointed to an ingot of gold that lay on the bench.

"Men have been killed for less," answered Min, never raising his eyes from his work.

When the watcher went down the stairs, he knew that he had not been talking with one with the mind of a child, and he was angry with himself for having spent all of his money for a ring which was of no use to him. Now he would have to wait another week before he could get a chance to win a fortune at the tables. But it was not long after that that the chance came, and it was a Kwangtung man who had been up the dark stairs, that told about it in a voice that trembled and with lips that quivered. When he had gone into the room without knocking, he had found the metal worker on his knees before a small image made of pure gold. He had stood in the doorway a long time without saying a word, and then he had asked Guey Min why it was he worshipped in the morning.

"Be quiet," Min had said; "be quiet. The time has come. I have changed this god of the sea to the god of gold, and he will bring me riches."

The word passed from mouth to ear, through the length of Mott Street; it trickled around the furthermost corner into Doyers Street; it went wherever a Chinese lived or worked. The story was true. There was a secret, and the man who knew

it could be seen and talked to. He was here. He was one of their own blood and their own race, perhaps he would remember that. They no longer spoke of buying or selling, or gambling. The word heard on street corners and in shops was gold, and the only name spoken was that of Guey Min. Other curious ones saw him worshipping after that—all who went might see. Dust was on his bench and he was always on his knees, burning prayer-sticks, pouring wine upon the floor and salaaming before that yellow idol he had made with his clever hands. Even the priests in the temple next door began to wonder if the new one, the god of the sea, would answer the prayers of the Chow Tsien man. Unscrupulous ones, who wanted nothing better than to get rich without working, hid themselves in the dark passageway outside his door, hoping that they might learn the spell by which money was obtained suddenly. But, save for a low mumbling, broken by the clink of metal, they heard nothing, and were compelled to go away unsatisfied.

And then, one afternoon, when the sun was shining on the other side of the street, there walked out of the doorway of the house next to the temple, the metal worker, but the fantan men who sat in the doorways on their little stools, watching for the innocent ones from the country, hardly knew him. The old Guey Min had worn a rusty suit of clothes and a hat that even boys in the street turned to laugh at. This new Guey Min was dressed in the finest silk, like one who calls upon the viceroy. Upon the top of his shiny black cap was a dragon of solid gold. About his wrists were coils of gold chains. Jewels were blazing in rings on his fingers. He walked down the street with his head in the clouds. The idle men gazed at him until their eyes bulged like the eyes of fishes. Then they followed him. Followed him to the corner, saw him turn in to where his friend the fortune-teller, lived. At the entrance, he unfolded his fan and knocked loudly at the door.

"*Loi heung,*" came a voice from the inside.

He who had been a metal worker would accept no such invitation as that. Yesterday, in old clothes, he would have turned the knob like any other man who wanted to see Hing, but to-day, ah! that was different. He was no longer a poor man and he must not be treated like one, and asked to open the door for himself, just like any beggar who might knock.

"*Hoi, hoi,*" he called, drawing himself up until he seemed to grow an inch taller. That was the difference between silk and cloth that was old and ragged.

There was a movement inside the room, a grumbling expostulation. So great a man as the fortune-teller does not like to be commanded in a country that is free, and where all men are supposed to be equal. The knob was turned slowly, the door was opened as if against its will, and the face of Hing was thrust out, a scowling, angry face, lined with wrinkles. He noted the silks, the hat with the dragon, the jewels, and then he drew in his breath with a loud noise, so loud that even the ones on the street heard.

"Guey Min," he said slowly, while the corners of his mouth turned upward. He reached out with one lean hand and touched the blouse. "Guey Min," he repeated, like a man who is not sure. "Has the fan-tan joss been smiling, ha? Come in, my friend, and tell me. It is only two days ago that I lost all I had to the devils."

With his robes gathered around him like a dainty woman who walks on an unclean street, Min walked in, looking neither to one side nor to the other. He sat down on a stool carefully, as if he were a man who has seen all there is in the world and has nothing more to learn.

"Has your good luck turned your head and made you so you cannot enjoy what you have?" asked Hing.

"No, my brother," began Min, slowly feeling his way along the path of speech; "I am the servant of the god who has brought me wealth; he is always with me, and I must always worship him, even in the street, when the time comes. See," he started forward suddenly and dropped his fan as he fell upon his knees. "Ma Chu, the great and good god, I salute you! I fall on my knees before you!" He touched his forehead to the floor. Those who were in the room stared at the corner to which he had pointed, but they saw nothing but darkness, though their eyes were wide open. Had they not known and talked to him, they would have called him a madman. A poor man might be mad, but a man with money cannot be. He sat on the stool again and was fanning himself. Hing, fortune-teller, to whom other men bowed, was bowing to him, offering him tea from a Tokio cup. Here was one to bend the knee to. He took from a shelf a thing wrapped in silk. He removed the covering and held a bamboo opium pipe in both hands, preciously—a brown pipe, old and seasoned, and with ivory carvings by a master.

"In all this country, this is the best," he said; "in all of our own country, there is only one other like it." He waved his hand toward a couch in the corner. "If you would smoke with me, I would always remember that I was once your good and true friend."

Facing each other, lying with the little lamp between them, they smoked, while in the other corner, men were talking in whispers, and as he smoked, Hing stole sly glances at the gold and jewels of the metal worker. They glistened like the sun shining on water and they hurt his eyes. So this thing he had heard about had come true at last, and Guey Min was rich—rich in a day—while he, foreteller of the future, had nothing. This man had been his friend, smoked with him, drunk tea with him, eaten with him. Surely, that was something. The voices in the corner were like bees among sweet flowers. They soothed him. He closed his eyes and saw himself back in China, in his own province. A great gold chain hung around his neck, as big as the one worn by Min, and on his cap was a mandarin's button. He was rich, happy, respected. Those who passed nudged each other and pointed him out as a great man. He opened his eyes and gazed dully at the flickering light. He counted the gold buttons on Min's coat, there were

twelve of them, and each one was worth— He leaned across the tray until his withered lips almost touched the ear of the smoker.

"Is it the secret?" he asked. Then he held his breath.

"The gods have been good to their faithful servant," was the answer. "Like a tree after the blossoms, the secret of the master has borne fruit."

"Will you tell your friend who has always wished you well?" asked Hing, making his voice humble.

Guey Min raised himself on one elbow and peered towards the corner.

"It is not for everyone to know this thing," he replied. "Send them away and I will tell you enough to make you rich, too."

In an instant, Hing had jumped from the couch. He waved his hands with authority.

"*P'ang-yau,*" his voice quavered; "you must go. I am to tell a great fortune now, and we must be alone." He opened the door wide and gazed at them fiercely as if they were all enemies. Grumbling and with hesitation, they trickled out into the street, where they mingled with the others and stood defiantly. They had gone like children, with laggard steps, yet afraid to disobey. The door closed behind them, they heard the key whine in the lock, and their chance for the great secret was gone.

In the heart of Hing, there came a feeling of exultation. His story of losing all his money had been a false one, but it had helped him, for now riches would shine on him like the sun in the morning, and his old age would rest softly on the bed of wealth. On the couch, the metal worker was smoking a cigarette, and as the eyes of the fortune-teller rested on him, there came a smile to his lips, and as a man preparing for a feast, he smiled, licked his lips, and walked towards his friend. He drew his feet out of his sandals and lay down on the other side of the lamp. His cheeks burned, and his hand trembled as he held the *yen hoc* with its burden of opium over the conical flame of the *tang*. It seemed to him a long while before he found the courage to speak, and then:

"I am glad the secret has come to you," he began, as he rolled the pill of golden brown on the bowl of the priceless pipe. "Is it very hard to make it turn into money?"

"It requires very great labor," returned Min, as he put his lips to the ivory mouthpiece. He inhaled the smoke leisurely, as a man of means should; he blew it out in great clouds until it filled the air with a pungent smell, and when the last deep-drawn whiff had ascended to the smoke-blackened ceiling, he began his story, while the fortune-teller listened eagerly. In all his life he had never heard anything like this. He had conjured up many strange tales for those who had paid him to read the future for them, but this—this was the most wonderful of all. Min's voice came soft and low, but it was sure, as of a man reading from a book and knowing exactly what the next word is going to be. It was truth.

"Just before my master died, he called me to him and said: 'Min, you have been a faithful servant and a good pupil, and some day you will be a great man and a great artist, for

you have already signed your own name. But, as great men are often poor men, I'm going to tell you how you may become rich. There will come a day when the overhead sun will be darkened by the powerful hand of Buddha. Watch for it carefully, for sometimes it only happens once in a lifetime, and on the night of that day, take all the gold you have and make the image of Ma Chu, the god of the sea and of sailors. Make the eyes of pearls, and the cap of silver. But you must use in the making, the coins of the country you may at that time be in. Turn aside then, from all work, worship Ma Chu, and pour fine wine upon the floor before him. When twenty-eight days have passed, gold will fall from him like snow from the clouds, and for every day after, that you worship enough, will come from him to equal his own weight and you will be rich.'

"He said no more. He died. I have waited, the sun became darkened; I have made a gold Ma Chu. I am rich." He held out both hands, cup-like. "Every day they are full. I need no more, but will help those who have been my friends."

The mouth of Hing was open, his lips were dry, and he moved uneasily on the matting.

"Can only one be made?" he asked, as he rubbed the stem of the pipe with his sleeve to appear indifferent.

"I will help those who have been my friends, for I need no more. I will make for you a god of gold; it will cost you nothing but the metal that goes in it, and then, if you like, you can make still more money by telling the fortunes of others and afterward sending them to me."

"You are my true friend." Hing rubbed his hands together. Already he could feel the touch of wealth.

"Your fame as a fortune-teller will grow like a garden when the summer rains come, and you will be great as well as rich." As he sat up, his silks rustled. "Now I must go. Bring the money when you are ready." He pushed his feet into his sandals, walked over, unlocked the door, and went out, leaving on the couch, the fortune-teller, who was dreaming.

All of his life, Hing had been a careful, cautious man, so much so that he was called *kan-shan*. In his trunk, always locked, was money, and long after he was left alone, he lay there and thought. There were two roads for him to tread and he could travel both at the same time. Who had ever heard of such a thing as that? He had enough gold to make a Ma Chu—that was one road—and he could show men the short path to fortune—that was the other. So he smoked himself into an opium dreamland which lasted until the sun was struggling to get in through the dusty window panes. When he awoke, there was a bad taste in his mouth, the lamp had burned out and was cold, and the door was unlocked. There were things which must be done before he had eaten, so he painted a sign on brown paper, which he pasted on his door:

HING TELLS THE WAY

TO WEALTH

HOW TO BECOME RICH WITHOUT WORK.

Then he went to the chest where

he kept his money, and out of a bag, he poured a double handful of gold pieces. Some were shiny and some were dull, but all were good gold. Melted down, he calculated, they would make a god a little bigger than his doubled fist. Then there came to his mind the words of Min: "Enough gold will come from him to equal his own weight." From out of another bag, he took a roll of bank bills and carried them to a shop where they gave gold for paper money. What he got he added to the pile, and without waiting to even turn the key in his door, he ran to the house in the shadow of the temple.

"Make me a Ma Chu god," he said; "when will it be done? I am the first one—don't forget. I shall buy the house on the corner; the room in front shall be for you. I will make the floor of teak wood; I will have curtains of brocade. Men will say we are brothers, and that you are the best one, for I will wait on you as on a master."

He walked up and down like a peacock, his shoulders thrown back and his arms swinging. Min, not replying, was weighing the money. Then he poured it into an iron pot which stood on the stove in which the fire was not yet lighted.

"In twenty-eight days, my friend," he said, as he lighted a match to kindle the fire, "and then you will see I have told you the truth."

Good news travels on feet with wings, and so when Hing returned, his face cracking with smiles, and feeling that a dozen years had fallen away from him, he found many men waiting. Reading the sign, hearing that the metal worker, become suddenly wealthy, had called upon him the night before, that they had been a long while together, they became suddenly anxious.

"*Ho la,* Hing," said one; "I have heard that the morning is the time for good fortunes. Tell me mine. Is there such a thing as money without work?"

"Everything is possible to those who believe," he answered; "put one piece of gold upon the table and you shall hear that which will make you happy until the day of your death."

"I have silver," he said; "it is good as gold."

"Gold to get gold," he answered sharply.

"Here!" It was another who spoke eagerly, pulling a gold piece from his pocket, and Hing led him to an inner room, while the others babbled among themselves, excitedly.

"The secret," he began, "has been told to me. It is only for the worshippers of Buddha."

"Guey Min's?" asked the man, moving in his chair uneasily.

"Guey Min's," responded Hing placidly. "But all must come to me first. He says so. There is no other way. And this is what you must do." He leaned forward and whispered, telling the story of the Ma Chu god with wonderful detail, adding flourishes here and mysteries there, until the lower jaw of the listener sagged like that of a dead man, and he shivered as if a cold wind were blowing upon his back. "Gold brings gold," he ended with. "I have told you all, and if your hands become hard with work, you are not worthy to live."

Until it was dark, they came and went, in and out of Hing's rooms, and everywhere men began to change their money into gold coins. The door of the metal worker was never closed, and the iron pot was always on the stove. There was no gold left in Mott street, nor in Doyers, nor in Pell, where Chinese lived. They went down town to the treasury with money in small sacks, even pennies, to have it changed into gold pieces; merchants drew gold out of their banks so they could have Ma Chus made. Poor men, who had little, formed themselves into companies, and each contributed as much to the common fund as he was able. It was a Celestial frenzy. Every day, and sometimes twice a day, Hing would go around to the metal worker's with a few more coins and say:

"Make my god a little bigger." Then he would rub his hands together and grin, showing the place in his gums where there were no teeth. "Make it just a little bigger, brother, for I was the one you told first."

The money poured in like a stream, and every man who went to Min's place saw him making gods from a pot of yellow metal, saw rows of them cooling on the bench, on the shelves, and along the edges of the floor. Two priests of the temple called on him and asked about this thing they had heard; asked him about his own god, and he pulled aside a little curtain and showed them a small yellow figure with pearl eyes and a silver hat. In front was a pot of perfumed oil with a floating wick that was burning in it, and all around the god were flakes of metal.

"That is what my god gives me, every day, enough of these to equal his own weight." He picked a piece up and handed it to them. "There is nothing like that in the temple, is there? Keep it, I have plenty."

They went away wondering, but one, who was crafty, and who had fine wrinkles around his eyes, remarked:

"Perhaps this is not gold; it may be a deception."

To make sure, they secretly sent it to a man who was skilled in all kinds of metals and asked him to tell them what it was. He sent it back with his answer. It was pure gold with no alloy in it. So the story was true after all, and the priests began to talk among themselves as they sat at night in the room back of the temple. Why should they not profit, too. Their own Ma Chu was made of wood and had green jade eyes. Every day, for years, they had brushed the dust from his face and shoulders and he had given them nothing, whereas— They would do it. Why not? So they put their gold together and carried it next door to be made into a money god.

Business was neglected, ordinary gods were left unworshipped, even fan-tan games were unprofitable. There was only one place of interest, and that was the room of Guey Min, where he was working, out of the goodness of his artist's heart, to make all Chinese rich. Hing was counting the days nervously. It was almost time. There is nothing which does not come to an end if one will only wait, and when he had come to twenty-eight, he walked with the eagerness of a bridegroom on his wedding day, taking some of his friends

with him, for now there was no longer such a thing as a secret. With great ceremony it—his Ma Chu—was handed to him.

"It does not look like gold—it is not so yellow," said an envious one who had not been able to get enough money.

"Wait, my friend, and I will show you." The metal worker smiled with superiority, as he who explains to a child. With a sharp tool, he bored a hole on the back of the god, and he gave the little pieces which came out to Hing. "Take those to the wise men who know, and ask them about it."

So, to make quite sure, and because he wanted to convince the man who had spoken, Hing took the pieces to the assayer's office to be tested, and he was told the same as the priests had been told, that they were of the purest gold, virgin. So he was satisfied. One, two, three at a time, the gods were claimed by their owners and taken from the rooms of Guey Min, until the day came when all were gone, until every fifth man in Chinatown had resigned himself to the life that follows great riches. Prayers went up like smoke from a fire on a still day.

Days and nights passed, and the unwinking, unblinking pearl eyes of the gold gods stared at bending, bowing, salaaming figures which begged them to shed fortune as the sun sheds its rays. A hundred times a day did the anxious Hing pull aside the curtain and look for a trace of the golden flakes, but all he saw was the settling dust of the joss sticks.

A padlock was on the door of the metal worker's room in the house next to the temple, and he had gone, and could not, therefore, be consulted nor asked for advice. And then a man who knew, went up one day and looked at the god that Hing had bought. He held it in his hand and scraped the metal from its arm. He rubbed the bits in the palm of his hand.

"Gold?" he repeated, contemptuously, "gold? It is brass." He turned it over so that it lay on its face, and he noted the hole in the back. "There is gold," he said, picking at it, "but not enough to make a button for a baby's shirt. A fine secret to make money—but only for Guey Min, ha?"

It is said that the metal worker took away enough gold to fill a wheelbarrow, and that if they catch him they will kill him.

The One Who Went Home

BY S. A. WARDLOW

Here is a smashing story of the blood lust that oft' times comes with gold, and two men who didn't "go home."

ESIDE the chattering waters, stood two miners: one was fair and frank, his young face aglow with the light of sudden joy, the other, dark, crafty, a greedy glint in his small black eyes, yet the joy was there, too, but a marred and selfish joy.

In the fair man's hand lay the cause of their delight and idle picks—a huge yellow nugget.

They had mined together for many months, these two: Nick Parton, an old-timer, versed in all the wisdom of mining life and all its wickedness; Robert Holmes, young, inexperienced, trustworthy.

The creek bank was rich. Nuggets of good size were not unusual; several had been found before by the two partners, but none like the irregular mass that betokened the realization of their dreams of home, far away in Eastern meadows.

It was Robert's pick that had uncovered it and he spoke joyfully:

"The finest one ever found on the creek! and with what we already have, Nick, it means home—home for us both."

"Yes, but say, we've got to keep dark about it. We might be robbed; pretty apt to be if some of those fellows got suspicious," said Parton. "We'll be still until we get it safe away, eh?"

"All right," assented the other, though a momentary wonder flickered through his mind that his partner should be so careful when they had implicitly trusted the small party who worked the creek, and been as unreservedly trusted by them.

They carried the nugget to the cabin, lifted a loose plank in the floor, and placed the golden lump in the shallow excavation below with the rest of their hoard.

They had some discussion regarding the wisdom of putting it there. The hiding-place had served well enough for the small amounts previously concealed there, as the two miners always sent them to the bank in the town below before they had accumulated sufficiently to be an inducement. Not that they doubted their fellow workers, but there were wandering vagrants drifting about the country, and other nearby camps held men not so honest. Both men felt that a safer place of concealment ought to be selected, but at the suggestion of Parton, always the leader, they decided to leave the precious nugget there until morning, and in the meantime contrive a more secure hiding-place.

Nick Parton stayed late in the sa-

loon at the camp below, that night. He did not drink excessively—drinking men talk. To his partner, their good fortune had brought joy unalloyed, to him, joy and something else—something that darkened his soul and fired his brain.

When he returned to the cabin, his comrade was asleep. Of that he stealthily assured himself, creeping with shoeless feet and shaded candle to the side of the rude bunk. The faint light of the candle filtered through the shading fingers upon the fair upturned face, smiling as though in dreams of home; it fell also upon the dark face and glittering eyes above.

Another glitter shone for an instant in the flickering light—an instant only. The sleeper slept on, the smile still lighting his face.

Parton, now reckless of noise and light, went from the bunk to the loose place in the cabin floor, lifted it and slipped his hand into the hollow beneath.

With a curse, he wrenched the board aside and held the candle down into the hole. It was empty. He felt around under the flooring—nothing. In a frenzy he tore up plank after plank in the rough floor—still nothing. The treasure was gone, all gone: the work of months, the nugget—gone.

He leaned against the wall, white with rage, weak with disappointed greed. He understood it all plainly. Robert had found the hiding-place, the safer hiding-place, had removed the gold to it and slept, assured of its safety, expecting to explain to his absent partner upon his return from the other camp. That partner had returned and the gold was gone, and none knew its hiding-place save the sleeper yonder with the smile on his face and the knife in his heart.

They buried the dead man with few inquiries concerning the manner of his death. Stabbed by an unknown hand during his partner's absence, they said, and noted with rough sympathy that partner's utter despair.

Surely man never mourned man more sincerely. He paced the floor of the cabin like a maniac and cried aloud in his grief. As days went by, men spoke of him as crazed by his great sorrow. He came no more to the creek to work, but staid about the cabin, taciturn and idle when visitors came; when alone, searching, always searching. Every cranny and chink of the cabin, every part of the rude furniture, he examined again and again. He dug over and over the surroundings. He racked his frenzied brain to find some new place to search.

"Gone, gone, gone!" he whispered over and over, and the miners hearing said:

"He mourns his partner."

Years passed. The camp moved to richer grounds but Nick Parton remained, grayed and decrepit.

Strangers found him at last, by a loosened plank in his cabin floor—dead.

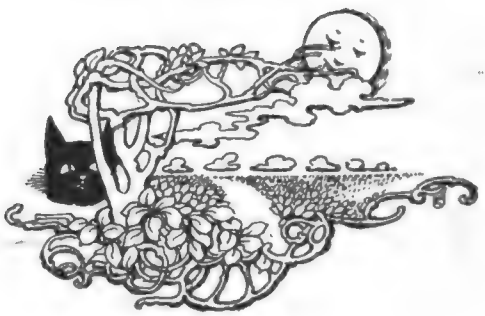
The cabin by the creek crumbled and fell. The creek, long robbed of its gold, chattered on undisturbed. The chaparral on the hills gave place to orchards and vineyards.

On a day when robins sang and

new leaves fluttered, a gang of Chinamen worked among the stumps of trees that once surrounded Nick Parton's cabin, clearing the ground for an orchard. One had almost uprooted the stump of a once mighty oak, when suddenly he stopped. He rose as suddenly, cast swift, stealthy glances around, then knelt.

When he arose again there was a bulge in his blouse. He continued his work, but he dreamed of China.

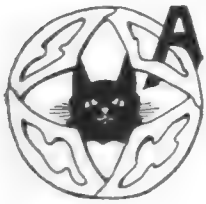
That night *Lee Wong went home.*



Dan Huddy's Scoop

BY H. P. HOLT

A light-fingered artist makes a big haul. It's his last trick and he intends to go straight, but he meets a bigger crook, and it's another case of "dog eat dog."



ABOUT once a year I meet Dan Huddy, in an odd little New York eating-house down a side street. I go in there when the mood takes me that way, and for other reasons which have nothing to do with this particular story. I met Dan in the same place by appointment frequently at one time, but that is some years ago. I don't say he has ever been in prison; at any rate, if he has, it must have been a short term between visits to New York, and he never referred to it in front of me. Dan Huddy is a sort of roving administrator of the affairs of individuals who might be induced to part with money. I don't believe he ever relieved me of a penny, but we understand one another, added to which, I don't recollect giving him much of a chance.

In a way, he is a gifted man. He is full of versatility and happy notions, but he always had a leaning towards the turf. I recollect we once opened a book at a race meeting. I was doing the penciling. We had to borrow the railway fare to get down, but Dan, among other things, is a rare optimist. You would have thought he was a millionaire as he stood up shouting the odds. He had a smile that would captivate a prison chaplain's confidence.

We came out all right on the first and second races, but it was a near thing on the third. A rank outsider squeezed home, and a young pup who didn't know a horse from a mule, scooped us nearly dry. The roof fairly fell in at the end of the fourth race. Dan gave me the tip to clear, when the only animal that could have saved us dropped behind. In his early days, Dan was a well-known sprinter; but they got him and he was a sick man for days afterwards.

The last time I ran across him in the restaurant, I recalled that pleasing incident to him. He did a sickly smile—there never was any real humor in it for either of us—and then he sighed contentedly.

"Those days are over," he said, with a quick glance round to be sure nobody was listening. "You know my ambitions always were fixed on a nice, quiet, little country inn. It's as good as done now. I can see myself there already—pigs and poultry at the back, a snug little parlor with a steady village trade, a bit put away in the bank, and never a thing done on the crook again."

As the only obstacle in the past that had deterred Dan from realizing his dream had been lack of necessary funds, I drew the very natural in-

ference that fortune had been smiling upon him, but he went on with his meal. I saw he was bursting to say something. Dan always has to be so careful in telling his secrets. They don't concern the sort of things you hear in drawing rooms. I knew he would tell me at least some of it if I didn't pump him, so I shifted the conversation to our earlier days, and later we walked to the room where I was living. He sat on the chair while I perched on the bed, and before long he was beaming at me through the smoke from his pipe.

"It just shows how you never know what to expect," he began suddenly, poking the fire with his boot heel. "Goodness knows, I've been trying long enough to get hold of a little pile. No man's had worse ups and downs than me, but it's no use kicking against luck.

"I've never exactly followed a trade, because I never had the good fortune to learn one, but I've done everything else. Somehow, however, I always got left at the last moment. There's several fortunes I ought to have now, if every man had his rights." I could not repress a little smile at the clever way he put it.

"This last six months," he went on, "I've had cruel luck, one way and another. It's a bit unhealthy for me on most of the race-courses, though I've managed to make a living. As you know, I don't mind turning my hand to anything that looks profitable, but luck ran dead against me. If ever I got my head three inches above water, I was sure to walk right into a gang that remembered something they didn't like about me, and I had to clear out on the quick.

"A fortnight ago, I went to the Pinchtown races with my heart bursting, for I had the finest tip that ever came out of a stable and not a bean in my pocket. Never mind how I got that tip. I hid among some straw for two days before I heard what I wanted to know, and ended up with a nasty five minutes with a groom in heavy boots; but I got the secret and made for Pinchtown. I only had three cards in my pocket and they're no good without a dollar or two, so I adopted a new name, worked in the old patter and raked in a bit by selling tips. Of course I didn't mention the filly I was going to put my shirt on in the last race, and naturally, as I didn't back the tips I sold, the critters won out of sheer cussedness. That fairly established me; the mugs thought I had second sight. At any rate, after my third tip was only beaten by its eyebrows, I was fifty dollars to the good, and I shut up shop, as it was getting time to attend to my own business then.

"I got twelve to one against the filly and spent the rest of the time wondering what I should do with the proceeds. I wouldn't have taken five hundred down for my drawings, even before the race. I knew what they knew in the stable, and I knew what they'd backed the filly for.

"There wasn't another animal in it from the start. That filly could have done the trip backwards. She covered the last furlong like an angel, and when she could smell the paint on the winning post, she was four lengths ahead. Then, just because

Dan Huddy's life depended on her walking another yard or two, she slipped and rolled over.

"I was so knocked that I couldn't take it in for a few minutes. It left me kind of dazed, and I went along with the crowd afterwards until I came to myself, but I had enough sense left to find a corner under a seat in a railroad car. My brain seemed to be in a maze. I couldn't get away from the sight of that filly tripping up and spilling six hundred and fifty of the best dollars that an honest man ever worked for.

"After the train stopped at Mulborough and started again, I came out from under the seat with suitable apologies to the people in the carriage, and dropped off the train, only getting a bump or two in the process.

"I was feeling pretty cheerless, but I climbed out onto the road and got back to Mulborough Station to see if there was anything doing there. Another race train came along, and while I was standing in the crowd, wondering what I might acquire, I felt a hand in my pocket. Of course I had nothing worth taking, but in the shake of a dog's tail, I had my hand on his wrist, and I led him quietly, but firmly, outside.

" 'Look here,' I said to him, 'my name's Dan Huddy, and I should hate to see you sent to the chokey for three months.' He was an intelligent-looking sort of fellow. Also, I had a good grip on his wrist.

" 'What's the game?' he asked.

" 'Either you and I share, honestly and equally, all our worldly possessions,' I replied, 'or, sure as there's a man in a helmet over there, you'll retire from society for just as long as the law decides.'

"He gave a twist of the wrist, but he didn't know my grip, and he caved in. He must have had a busy night, for the total haul was nearly thirty dollars. I rather took to him after I had put my share in my pocket. He had nothing further to fear from me and we grew chatty. It seemed he had been to Pinchtown, too, and had come a bad cropper. The initial bond of confidence having been established, we became quite friendly and made one or two mutual confessions with an eye to business. Jim Short, his name was; or, at least, he told me so, without producing his birth certificate. After we had cemented our friendship over a friendly cup, he confided in me that he was not in Mulborough for his health. He was wary, and I answered all his questions as frankly as I could afford to. Finally, he told me it was a two-man job he was after, but that he really couldn't carry it through without a partner.

"I gave him my references, in a manner of speaking, and then we got straight away to business. It was Mrs. Silas K. Goldberg's diamonds that he had his eye on. They were lying all shining and pretty, at the Towers, the old lady's manson, fairly asking for trouble; and the best opportunity for us, he calculated, would be on the following night, after a festive gathering. It was not strictly in my line of business, but I was badly upset about that filly, and didn't see a ray of hope anywhere, excepting in the direction of the diamonds.

"We talked it over, and as we did so, I could see he knew his work. He

had a beautiful little set of milled steel tools in his belt. We laid our plans and decided to halve the spoil if we got it.

"It's remarkable what little care people take of their valuables. If I had a string of diamonds like them, worth fifty thousand dollars, I should hire three sergeants of police with loaded revolvers to stand over them until they were converted into cold cash. Anyway, we called at the Towers in the early hours of the morning. Jim Short had found out something about the geography of the mansion, and within ten minutes of my helping him through a side window, he was back again, as cool as a judge, with a black case packed with diamonds, in his hand, and nobody a bit the wiser.

"The first thing we did was to make tracks. We lost interest in that part of the country all of a sudden, but we had to be precious careful. We walked hard for five solid hours, and must have covered twenty miles before we felt it would be safe to board a train. Even then, we had to keep our eyes open, so we only came part way to New York, and then we took to the road again. I stuck to Jim Short closer than a brother while he had the jewels in his pocket. However fond he might have grown of me, he stood to make a good thing out of it if he gave me the slip. Perhaps he didn't think of doing such a thing; perhaps he realized that he didn't stand an earthly chance.

"We were both dead beat that night when nightfall came, and it started to rain hard. As our money was running short, and neither of us was exactly well dressed, we began to look around for somewhere to sleep. There was a pretty little bungalow set back from the roadside, and we made for it in the hope of getting some idea where we could turn in.

"Meek as a lamb, I knocked at the door—once—twice. Jim winked, and after waiting a few minutes, we reconnoitered around the back. Everything was quiet as a grave. We could see inside. The place was furnished but unoccupied. The rain was coming down like water from a hose pipe, so we slipped back the catch of the window and got inside.

"You could see that nobody had been there for days, because everything was covered with dust, so we started to make ourselves comfortable. We found a lamp and soon had a cheerful light. There was no food in the place, so far as we could make out, but we had enough bread and cheese with us for supper, and then we settled down in a couple of armchairs.

"Although I was tired out, I had no notion of dropping off to sleep so long as Jim kept his senses, but before long, he started to snore. I watched him for about half an hour, and then I knew he was not pretending, so I just closed my eyes for a short nap.

"It seemed to me that I hadn't been dozing for more than five minutes when I awoke with a start. The lamp was still burning, and the first thing my eyes fell on surprised me considerably more than the vision of the filly stumbling at the winning post had done. Jim was awake and

we both stared around like a couple of petrified dummies.

"Standing at the far side of the table was the most benevolent-looking old gentleman you ever heard of. He had a beard right down his chest and big blue eyes, but what gave us something to think about was the fact that he had a revolver in each of his hands. He had both of us properly fixed up at a range of about four yards, but all the time he looked as mild-mannered as a church-warden coming round with the plate.

"'May I ask how long the pair of you have been occupying my little place?' he asked in an amiable voice, without, however, lowering either of the revolvers a hair's-breadth.

"'We had nowhere to shelter when the rain started, so we came in here,' I said, feeling the explanation had the weight of truth.

"'Ah!' he commented drily. 'The rain has stopped now, so I need not detain you any longer. But before you go, you had better show me what you have in your pockets. People who take liberties like this might take other things.'

"Jim Short flashed a look at me. He had only fifty thousand dollars worth of diamonds bulging from his inside pocket. I cursed the pair of us for our folly in going into the bungalow. It was a most awkward situation.

"'We haven't touched a thing,' Jim said; and I agreed, hoping he would believe us.

"'That may be,' the man replied steadily, 'but it is as well to be on the safe side. I assure you I shall let you both go if I am convinced that you have taken nothing of mine.'

"'Is that a promise?' asked Jim quickly.

"'On my word of honor,' replied the old gentleman. 'Now, empty your pockets on the table, please.'

"I had practically nothing but the three cards and a few dollars. He gave me a look as though he had summed me up when his eyes fell on the cards. Then Jim turned his things out.

"'Come along, what have you got in that inside pocket?' asked the old gentleman, not quite so pleasantly. He wagged the shining barrel of the revolver as he spoke.

"'Well, show it to me and then you can go.'

"'It's nothing of yours,' said Jim.

"Jim was properly cornered, so he pulled the case out, and was told to open it. I was afraid, for a moment, he was going to take the risk of bolting, which would have ended in both of us getting hit with a lump of lead, but he saw the game was up. A moment later, the diamonds were shining with a blood-red gleam in the lamplight.

"The old gentleman glanced at the stones. Neither Jim nor I had a word to say.

"'Imitation jewelry?' asked the man with the revolvers.

"'Yes,' said Jim, leaping at the excuse. 'I'm selling 'em. That's the only one I've got left.'

"The other man put one of the revolvers in his pocket. 'You are at liberty to go now,' he said, 'but leave that case there for a minute. I want to discuss it with you. They're a very good imitation.'

"'Yes, and a nice bit they cost me, too,' observed Jim. The tension seemed to be relieved a trifle.

"'You must find a difficulty in disposing of such things,' said the elderly gentleman.

"'Y-es,' replied Jim, not at all sure of his ground.

"'I wouldn't mind taking them if the price were satisfactory,' observed the man with the gun.

"Jim was in a fix. 'I don't want to part with this lot,' he said.

"'Name your own figure.'

"'I couldn't sell 'em,' replied Jim; 'at least, not for what you could pay.'

"'Shall we say ten thousand dollars?' asked the benevolent-looking gentleman, putting away his other revolver. He no longer looked dangerous. I tried to give Jim the hint to make a dash for it. Perhaps he understood more about his fellow-creatures than I do. At any rate, he scented business and ignored my look.

"'I wouldn't take a cent less than thirty thousand,' declared Jim.

"'Look here,' said the other man, 'I have a pretty shrewd idea how the land lies. I don't want to know who you are, and I am certainly not going to tell you who I am. You can go if you like and take these things with you, but you know yourselves that it is extremely difficult to find a suitable market for imitation diamonds like these. I rented this bungalow for a couple of months and my time is up. I just came down for a few odds and ends, and I am going out of the country. Forgive me if I take out a revolver again, purely for self-protection, this time. I have notes in my pocket for a considerable greater sum than you are likely to get for your necklace. I will make you a definite and final offer—twenty thousand dollars, down. Take it or leave it.'

"We shouldn't have got much more than that, you must understand, even if we had taken the risk of finding a buyer ourselves. Jim knew that. The old gentleman held his revolver out steadily and produced a thick wad of notes from his breast pocket.

"'How do we know you won't point that thing at us and ask for the money back and the diamonds?' asked Jim.

"'I presume you want ten thousand each?' the man replied quietly.

"'Yes.'

"'Stop just where you are. I will count yours out now and you can go with it. Your friend can follow you.'

"'Come on, then,' said Jim. His face was flushed. My lips were so dry I could hardly speak.

"Keeping the revolver ready for business, he counted out the notes and handed them to Jim.

"'Count them, and get out, as quick as you like,' he said.

"Jim was trembling so much that he could hardly run his fingers through them. It wasn't half a minute before he had pushed them into his pocket and slid through the window.

"Without waiting, the elderly gentleman counted out another packet of notes and handed them to me. I grabbed them and shot out like a rocket. Jim had disappeared—I never saw him again—but I didn't worry about that. I put the notes in my sock and never stopped walking until

dawn. Then I took the money out and counted it. It was just the sweetest occupation that any man was ever engaged in. I nearly cried with joy and then hid them away again. You don't know what it meant to me—a clean start and an honest livelihood. I hardly remember how I got back to New York. I counted those notes over a hundred times and slept with them next to my skin. See, I'll show them to you, because I can trust you."

With shaking fingers, he unfastened his shirt and drew out a little bag. His eyes glistened in the candle-light as he emptied it of its contents. He put the notes into my hand. I had worked in a bank—once. My eye went instinctively to certain tiny marks. One was there—two were there. The others were missing. Even my hand shook a bit.

"Dan," I began awkwardly, "you—you've been fooled."

"What d'you mean?" he almost shouted.

"They're forgeries," I said sadly.

He got up from the chair and glared at me for a few moments.

"Well, of all the villainy—" he began; and then, cramming his hat on his head and picking up the notes, he went out into the wicked world, slamming the door behind him.

A Potsherd Streaked With Silver

BY PATRICK VAUX

Conscience, that wonderful thing which sears men's souls with a knowledge of their guilt, made a "slacker" right a wrong with his life, with a sinking steamer as a background.

WHEN Cheverton jumped at the chance to ship as chief engineer of an A. U. S. vessel, he blessed the general stoppage brought about by the great strike, for he had been looking for a berth during many weeks. But he had not been on board for four hours when he found he was in a clove-hitch, out of which there was no slipping for him. Just the same clove-hitch, which, he declared, had spoiled his entire life.

"What d'ye say?" he rapped out to his third engineer, who was again helping himself amply to sea-pie. "Rippon is captain of this craft?"

"He was," came the correction. "But the strikers knocked him out; caught him as he was getting past the dock gates. The manager succeeded in rushing Captain Padgham aboard, though, safe and sound."

"Padgham?"

"Yes; Daniel P. Padgham. Came out of the Mallory Line."

Cheverton made a clutch at the granitine teapot as it careered up the messroom table, the sugar basin and plates in its wake. Over his short, hatchet-shaped, sallow face, passed a wave of indecipherable feeling.

"Middling height, scar on left cheek?"

The engineer jerked out the words reluctantly, as if he feared corroboration. With redoubled interest his third engineer regarded him. He mumbled as he busily masticated his food: "Just him! just him! He was looking for a billet in a mighty hurry, I'm told. He was at the shipping office when they rushed me and t'others through the pickets. By thunders, he does look a 'driver,' though!"

"Maybe he has been driven in his time," replied Cheverton drily, his face again under control.

The Third gulped down his fifth cup of black iridescent tea, and having bitten a piece off the plug of sweet Cavendish in his tobacco-box, stuffed the quid into his left cheek, then made away for his bunk. But Cheverton remained sitting, swaying a little to the steamer's floundering, and staring gloomily up at the lamp wriggling in the gimbals.

"Because I was a bit doped with liquor I've dumped myself into this billet—with him on the bridge! He's all the man I am not, and am never likely to be now, but I hold him in my hand this time! His face'll be a bonny sight when he sees me!"

Without lighting his well-blackened pipe, he sucked thoughtfully at it, weighing the beat of his engines and the lurching of the vessel, to-

gether with the unexpected features of his situation.

"Him up topsides!" he grunted, biting savagely on the stem of his pipe. "'Hell to pay, and no pitch hot'—same as before? Not this time, no! The drink has rotted the man in me, I know; but I can wring the heart out of him, this time. Him? Always been top dog—Dicky! Even the poor dead lass that cast a kind eye on me, he filched her away— Well, here goes for report number one."

The squalls sweeping out of the northeast as the steamer passed Sandy Hook had greatened into a stiff gale, driving the scud along like smoke under the tiers of leaden-grey clouds streaming down the wind. Sulkily the vessel butted through the darkening seas, her decks running white and scuppers gouting ceaselessly.

"Kind of glad I am, Dicky is topsides," groaned the engineer, clawing his way amidships.

The officer of the watch, a long, thin man in shining oilskins, with sou'wester bunched under his chin, stared into his face when he stepped on to the bridge. Sinisterly the mate croaked:

"Wantin' to see the captain, hey! It hasn't taken you long to find out things below. Serve us right for pushin' out this old crock again' the strikers... Captain in the chart-house. Oh, your time's coming, hey!"

"Knew she was a crock, did ye, Mister, hey? Ye must have been as hard set on dead horse as myself," gibed the engineer in passing.

When the gush of wet air roared in, swirling the chart and leaden weights off the table, Captain Padgham, who had been standing with his back to the door, scrutinizing the barometer and aneroid alongside the log desk, wheeled slowly.

"A very dirty night coming al—"

He ceased of a sudden, lips still parted, black eyes fixing the engineer with a heavy incredulous gaze, as Cheverton leaned against the door, holding fast the handle of it to ensure privacy. "Something of a joy-meeting, eh, Dicky?"

At the sound of the chief's voice, a deep flush flamed out on Padgham's dark, rough-hewn features like a danger signal. His mouth closed with a snap.

"You!" he cried huskily, with teeth clenched, "you!"

"Seems like it, eh?" replied Cheverton, "but sooner than be knowingly with you, I'ud starved among the rats and pickarounds 'long the waterfront. Oh, you're getting a reputation, Dicky! A dirty smear on a clean name, eh, Dicky?"

The captain whirled forward. Broad, clumsy, shapeless in his reefer, oilskins, and shawl, he seemed in the light of the lamp like an avalanche of wrath.

"It wasn't your evidence that got me clear, was it?" he snarled, with ugly twisted lips, bringing up face-to-face with his engineer.

Cheverton edged away. He replied sullenly:

"Don't you be so hurricanish, Dicky! Some folks ashore 'ud like to know more; and bygones ain't bygones, yet, 'tween you and me. You savvy, eh? Take that face of yours away; I'm not so fond of it, as you

know. My mark on that cheek is enough for me. It is the scrap heap below that brings me on your—— bridge. A sewing machine 'ud run sweeter. First," he enumerated sarcastically, "tail shaft and the thrust—"

For some seconds the captain listened to the list of defects. Of a sudden, the black look on his saturnine features deepened and he grunted viciously.

"Stow your gab!" he exploded. "Think I don't know you? Ay, I sized you up, years ago. What have you been since you were a boy—a slacker! I say,—a slacker! Even in that awkward business of mine, you slacked; when a word from you would have cleared my name of murder. Defects! Use your tools,—in liquor as usual, when you signed on, or ye'd have known more, eh?"

"Once I wasn't in liquor, Dickey, eh—once? Who hit first, yon time? I could say what the police 'ud jump to hear." Cheverton jeered, turning to leave the charthouse. "I know why you were in such a blamed hurry to clear out. Use my tools—aye, that I will!—to get you somewhere else than into port. You—"

But his words were lost in the tumult of a furious squall of rain and hail that pelted the upper works like small shot, to eddy away, howling and scuffling over the leagues of stormy sea. With dilated pupils the captain watched him go; glancing about in a sort of scared fury, when he also, hurried outside, to detect whether Cheverton had by any chance been overheard.

As the night passed on, the gale shifted into north by northeast and an ugly run of head seas threw its weight on the steamer, even trying to pin her down among the breakers boiling up in the night with a spectral flicker of foam on their writhing crests. Engines had been slowed, for the propeller was in the air half of the time, and now the vessel fought the great rushes of water with but steerage way on her.

Her chief engineer, his overalls streaked with oily grime from head to foot, climbed up the ladder to the starting platform, after having fitted a new bolt in one of the central sections of the thrustblock. He glanced at the steam and water gauges to his right and gripped the steel guard-rail as the vessel toppled headlong.

"Another bolt started and finished with," he rasped to the Third in the raucous voice of one accustomed to talk amidst the dull but sonorous notes of machinery; I'll hold the thrust together if it and the rest don't jump away. Then, it's life belts and sea water for us all, my son! It is up to me, it is, to drive her in."

Gleams from the flickering lamps streaked the polished crank-heads jogging up and down in deliberate monotony, just as if steam and steel could withstand the fiercest hurricane. Flashes illumed the shining brass and steel of the cranks as round they came and went in obedient mobility to the thrust and pull of their connecting rods.

But brighter than all glittered the hatred in Cheverton's grey eyes.

Snatches of hostile memories—feuds with Padgham in boyhood and in later years, culminating in Chever-

ton's disgrace and disappearance on account of his unsteady habits and quarrelsome nature—now recurred to him with peculiar satisfaction.

He growled to himself:

"Dicky? Never a good word, but always for him,—Dan, you'll get a bit of your own back, soon!"

The steamer pitched heavily, and Cheverton, balancing his hunched figure on the gratings, a long-spout oilcan and a sweat rag in either hand, made a grotesque figure swaying to her careening. On a thought of disaster thwarting him, he fleered tempestuously at the Third, who had hastily throttled down the engines as they broke into a mad fling, while the green sea gouted through the skylights and fiddleys. But his reply was lost in the dull chaotic resonance of the hammering and clawing of the water on the vessel's steel sides.

When some minutes later, in answer to a call from the bridge, Cheverton crawled up through the fiddley opening, and gripping a life line, stood in the shelter of a ventilator and listened to the captain, the "chief" felt in his savage exultation of revenge that life had never held for him one sweeter moment.

Captain Padgham had thrown out his left arm where weltered the dim rush of seas, hurling themselves on the steamer's bows with a whelming crush. Amidst the hubbub of the elements his strong voice came in shreds of sound, weak as an infant's.

"More way on—keep her—to the seas—boats stoved in. Must—more way."

"With more steam—engines away—shaft; and then—" The engineer completed his sentence with a very significant gesture towards the raging depths. "I'll nurse them. You guess why—in port?"

"You know nothing, curse you."

It was as if a swirl of the storm had riven these words out of a tortured and choking heart. But the engineer was already making for the fiddleys and below.

As Cheverton paused to glance astern to starboard, where the lights and glowing portholes of a large mail-steamer were drawing into view, the captain stared at the dim, undersized figure with its bent shoulders—stared as if hatred could slay in a look. When the next instant the chief engineer disappeared as a rasping squeal, a crunching, broke appallingly through the tumult of the storm, to be followed by a pitch of the vessel, as if taking a header into a void, the captain's first racing thought was of Cheverton's death below.

And so it was, that with her tail shaft and thrust block broken, the steamer broached to. Rockets soared up from her bridge; her siren boomed for succor; seas leaping out of the darkness sluiced her across her hull, levelling the bulwarks, twisting the rails, smashing and streaming over, and pouring into her upper works, skylights, and hatchways.

Amidships, the doomed vessel was mightily smitten by a combing breaker that caught the captain struggling to release himself of his life-line, and taking him in its embrace, dropped him to the deck below. As he disappeared in the ebbing spume, down the starboard side, the chief engineer, dashing out, dragged him back up the

sloping deck with right limb broken and ribs fractured. Others of the crew were gone into the black, howling wastes.

But already the liner astern was throwing up answering lights.

Sheltered by the overhanging poop, Cheverton, with an arm round the groaning captain, marked the lifeboat crawl down the path of white light cast by the liner's searchlight—cross the bows—fling a line on board, then drop to leeward, the ocean leviathan manœuvering to give cover to her small craft.

As he watched the surviving hands, one by one, slip into the cork belt and drop clear of the steamer's side down the line, to be hauled safe aboard the lifeboats, memories and thoughts thronged on him as swift visions—rebuking—sustaining him.

The mate, who had crawled along, yelled in his ear.

He shouted in reply:

"Can't be done. He's dying. Rib pierced a lung or something."

"Let — me — be —" the captain pumped, gurgling with his life blood. "Save yourselves."

Cheverton gritted an oath. He frowned at the crimsoned mouth.

"A slacker, you called me—not this time, I reckon; no, not this time!" He thrust away the deck officer, and motioned toward the lifeboat heaving and twisting on a bed of foam." Jump, mate, and save yourself. But, not me. He is my own mother's son."

By the searchlight's beam he saw his stepbrother's lips move; and straining his ears he bent closer.

"What—do—you—know—Dan?"

The words bubbled up, and a cascade of brine spouting shoulder high across the deck, washed the blood way.

"Just what you yourself knew, but couldn't swear to, ashore. The striker did hit first, then tried to knife you coming out of the company's shed," was the reply; "and I saw the police had suspicions of you, so I set my mind on playing against you that hard, whether or not the cops nicked you, and put you in the electric chair . . . but I'm doing all I can now, though it isn't much—just to stand by with you—Dicky, boy."

A minute later, the lifeboat slowly, as if with deep reluctance, pulled away out of the lee and across the drooping bows.

The Skeletons of Paradise

BY HAPSBURG LIEBE

A newly-married couple, at the suggestion of the bridegroom, go to live for five years, alone, on an island, fancifully called "Paradise." When their friends call for them at the end of their "Robinson Crusoe," three skeletons are found on the island. His confession, found by the body of the bridegroom, tells what happened.

ONE of them we found in a mound on the island shore. The second we found on a mound in the centre of the island; there were green vines laced through and through the bleached white bones, and its fingers were lying pressed close to its downturned eye-sockets. The third one we found buried a foot below the second, and between the ribs of the left side, there was a rusted hunting-knife.

My name is William North, and I am a lawyer. I was to Weydman Nokes, best friend, chief counsellor, and manager of affairs. Nokes was young, slender—almost fragile, dyspeptic, and a millionaire without relatives. He had run the gamut of luxuries rapidly. First had come the passion for popular sports; after that had come a mania for aeroplanes; then there followed in quick succession, relic-hunting, racing automobiles, fine horses, gambling, and yachting. I was just beginning to wonder what Nokes would do next, when my office door opened, and in stepped Nokes, to answer for himself.

He dropped into a chair, drew off his gloves, placed his cane across his knees, and lit a cigarette before he spoke. Then he said to me boldly:

"North, don't call me a fool. It won't do any good. I can't help it any more than I can help my hair being black or my eyes brown. I'm tired of everything, North. I've got to have something new. I'm going back a thousand years, North—I'm going to be a savage for five years."

"Delightful!" I sneered. I liked the boy. My patience with him was well nigh exhausted.

"Yes," smiled Nokes—"very. During my last winter's cruise in the tropics, I found a small and uninhabited island which is a paradise. I named it that—Paradise. Just that one word, and not Paradise Island, understand—Paradise." He rolled the word on his tongue as though it were a bit of honey. I stared, and he continued: "I can't go alone. I should lose my mind in the silences. I offered the sum of a hundred thousand to one of my friends after another, in the effort to get a companion. Nothing doing—until Elva McEnnis found out. She agreed to marry me and go with me. It was a sacrifice. Her brother's in bad over somebody else's money—"

"Elva McEnnis!" I broke in, amazed. I knew her. A slim, reed-like creature with golden hair and sea-blue eyes and a sweet, pale, hyacinthine beauty. "Elva McEnnis a

savage? Rot! She'd wilt like a violet. Mentally, a Brobdingnagian; physically, a Lilliputian. If you accept the sacrifice, you're——"

"Who asked for advice, North?" He spoke almost angrily. "Now listen. Take good care of my affairs. You see, I trust you, North. Five years from today, you must come for me. My yacht, the Ringdove, will take us down, and then be returned to you. Sell it, or keep it for your own use, as you like—I'm giving it to you."

He left a paper telling me of the location of his Paradise, forced from me my word that I would say nothing of the affair, shook hands with me warmly, and departed. The next day he was quietly married. The morning following that, saw the Ringdove sail from the harbor, headed south.

A few weeks later, the yacht returned. I sold it, and added the proceeds to Nokes's already magnificent fortune. Then I settled myself to wait five of the longest years of my life; for, as I have said before, I liked Weydman Nokes immensely.

When the time was come, I gathered four of my friends, all of them trustworthy men, chartered a small steamer, and set sail for Paradise. We arrived in due time. A mound on the beach caught my attention the moment I had put my feet on the shore, and I was afraid. But the person who had been buried there was certainly neither Nokes nor his wife, for the skeleton was more than six feet in length. We left it, and made haste toward the center of the island.

It was, in all truth, a Paradise. It was a place of flowers and palms, sweet odors and ripening fruits. Soon we came upon a hut built of brush and covered with rotting tarpaulin. Inside we found a pile of rotting boughs, a mildewed skirt, a ragged yachting coat, and a strip of white cloth of very fine texture, the latter-named being covered with writing and dark-red spots.

Then my friend Jamieson gave a startled cry and dashed from the hut. We followed him to a mound a few yards off, a mound that had at its head a crude wooden cross. Lying on this mound, with green vines twining about its bleached white bones, with its fingers pressed close to its downturned eyesockets, we found the second skeleton.

"She has died," said Jamieson, huskily, "and he has grieved himself to death here in the silence. There is no doubt that he came to love her. She was worth it."

"Yes," I agreed, "she was worth it."

When we disinterred the third skeleton, beneath the cross, we found a rusted hunting-knife between the ribs of its left side. It had been a thrust that had reached the heart. We viewed the thing with horror. John Sayler voiced the sentiments of us all when he finally said:

"He has killed her. Indeed he did become a savage. The brute! He was my friend; but I say, 'damn a man who could do it.'"

I said very angrily, "Amen!"

Perhaps Jamieson had the best head of us all. He put forth a hand and took from me the strip of blood-stained cloth.

"Wait!" he protested. "Don't con-

demn Nokes yet. There is a message here—and then the thing we found on the beach is to be reckoned with. Shall I read this, North?"

"If you please," I answered.

The message was addressed to me. It follows:

"I'll have to hurry, North, for I'm not to be blessed with much more of life. I'll begin with New York, as I rightly should.

"When the yacht was almost ready to sail, I had a little quarrel with my skipper, and he left the vessel. I found a good navigator at the last minute, however, in the person of an Austrian named Burcoltz. He was a giant, this Burcoltz—a big, broad man, with yellowish hair and upturned mustache. I soon discovered that he was highly educated, and that he had in time past owned his own private yacht. He seemed a thorough gentleman. I explained to him that my wife and I were going to spend a few months on the island—a new thing in honeymoons, you know. We were put ashore late in the afternoon, Elva and I. The yacht . . .

(Here the message ran into one of the dark-red spots on the strip of cloth, and the writing became illegible. Jamieson took up the thread below the spot.)

. . . long night. We went to the highest point on the island to watch the sun rise. It was so very still. We were in a world of our own. It was a most beautiful, most peaceful world. I put an arm about my wife's waist. She seemed more fragile than ever, and I wanted to tell her that I really loved her; perhaps I should have told her, had I not been afraid that she would not believe me. Suddenly Elva pointed a finger toward the jungle below. I looked, and saw Burcoltz making his way toward us! I looked for the yacht, but it was nowhere to be seen, and I felt then, that a serpent had come to my Garden of Eden.

"Why are you here?" I cried to the giant Austrian.

He did not speak until he had come up to where we stood. I saw him look into my wife's face, drinking in her frail beauty hungrily, and I thought I knew why he was there.

"I ran the Ringdove upon a reef, and she went down with all on board save me," smiled Burcoltz. "Surely, you couldn't expect a man to drown when he could save himself!"

And I knew that it was a lie.

The three of us had not been on the island a week before the Austrian was making love to Elva, in his violent, foreign way. Elva seemed to fear that the man would harm me. She repulsed his advances as mildly as she could. But that appeared to make Burcoltz but the more determined. And soon I began to hate Burcoltz as I have never hated a man before.

It was my slight build, my inferior strength, that kept me from attacking Burcoltz with my club—oh, yes, I had a club, and so did Burcoltz. One day, my whole body trembling with rage, I glared into the giant's eyes, and said to him insanely:

"You must leave the island immediately. You have no business here. We do not want you."

Burcoltz shrugged his massive shoulders, and threw out his hands. You know, North, how those fellows do that. He twirled at his fierce mustache very calmly.

"How, I beg leave to ask," he said with stinging courtesy, "am I to leave the island? We have no boat. We have nothing of which to make a boat—nor have we tools, if we had the material. We are far from the lanes of ships. I will leave you if you will but show me the way."

There was no way. The serpent must remain in my Garden of Eden. I thought I should go mad. I had come to love my little wife very much. And she seemed to love me equally as well as I loved her. We . . .

(Again did the message run into one of the dark-red spots on the cloth. Jamieson passed over it nervously).

. . . and weary days. I was madly in love with my frail, sweet wife now. I deplored the fact that I had accepted her sacrifice. She smiled, kissed me, and said there was nothing to forgive.

"There is but one thing that makes me unhappy, dear," she said to me. "It is Burcoltz. I am afraid. He may kill you, Weydman. He has a hunting-knife—I saw it. What a pity you did not bring weapons!"

Late that night, Elva stole from our hut. I was sleeping, and I didn't know that she was gone until she returned. She knelt beside me, kissed me, and put the Austrian's hunting-knife in my hands!

"Now, Weydman," she whispered to me, "Burcoltz has no weapon at all. He has nothing save an awkward club."

"But to knife a man," I chattered, "is so brutal! If this were only a gun, or—"

"My dear!" exclaimed Elva, caressing my hair tenderly, "are you not now a savage, a primitive man? There is no law here to prevent it. I hate the idea, too. But you must do it to preserve your own life. I love you, Weydman! Yes, or I could not tell you to do such a thing as this!"

I walked out into the bright moonlight. I turned the knife over and over, and watched it flash. I looked toward the little hut of brush in which Burcoltz slept. But I couldn't go down to kill him. I was not enough of a savage to kill a man in cold blood. I turned back to Elva and the knife fell from my hands. Elva stooped and picked it up.

One fine evening, I was standing on the rocky headland on the north shore, watching the sun set, when I saw my wife and Burcoltz walking along the smooth, sandy beach below. They were conversing in low tones, and I could not hear what they said. I became weak. I sank to the stones, gibbering foolishly. I resolved anew to kill the giant. I rose, and peered over the brink. Elva and Burcoltz were standing still thirty feet below me. I took up a stone the size of a man's head, and hurled it with all my might. It killed the Austrian!

Elva turned her face upward, and it was very white.

"Thank heaven, Weydman!" she cried.

For the time being, I was a madman. I denounced her, cursed her. I told her, which, of course, was not true, that I had heard her making love to the Austrian. I paused for lack of breath, and glared down at her.

She smiled. "Of course, Weydman," she said sweetly, "I saw you standing there. I had to make love to him to keep him from seeing you while I led him here for you to kill him."

This made me very happy indeed. I felt that I could never make amends for my vile accusation. I hurried down, seized my wife and kissed her passionately. Then we made a hole in the sand, and buried the big man. And now I felt that I was a savage.

Several months passed. They were the happiest months of my life. All that has happened, and all that is to happen in my little, little future, cannot take away that fact. We had fruits to eat always, and fish whenever we wanted them, and the flowers never died. Elva . . .

(Here another blood-spot interrupted.)

. . . looked at me with awful eyes.

"I won't deceive you any longer," she said harshly. "I loved Burcoltz! You are so puny. He was so big and strong. I begged you to attack Burcoltz, to give him a reason for killing you! Some day, Weydman, I shall kill you with this knife."

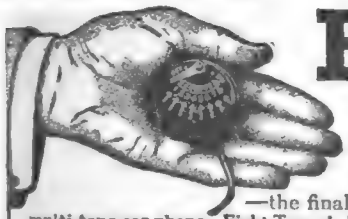
She thrust the weapon back into her girdle. I know that she will keep her word. Of the two of us, it is she—sweet, fragile, hyacinthine Elva—who is the savage. I still love her . . .

Thus ended the message. There was no bloodstain there. Jamieson looked up and spoke to me:

"*She* killed *him* while he was writing that he loved her! The spots on the cloth—she wiped her hands—"

"I understand," I interrupted.

But did I understand? Can any man understand? I have wondered and wondered since about the bone-fingers that were pressed closed to the downturned eyesockets.



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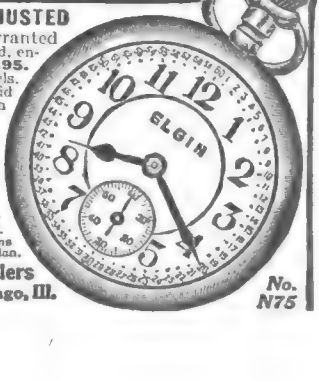

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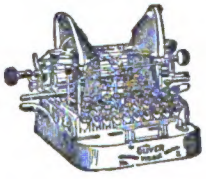

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